



WASHINGTON LAWYERS' COMMITTEE
FOR CIVIL RIGHTS AND URBAN AFFAIRS

October 24, 2019

Council of the District of Columbia
Committee on the Judiciary
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20004
Email: judiciary@dccouncil.us

Re: Testimony on Bill 23-0324, the "Restore the Vote Amendment Act of 2019"

Dear Councilmembers:

Attached is written testimony from two D.C. residents currently incarcerated in the federal Bureau of Prisons in support of Bill 23-0324, the "Restore the Vote Amendment Act of 2019." We have redacted their names to protect their privacy.

Best,

Stacey Litner
Prisoners' Rights Advocacy Director

Dear Honorable Members of The
D.C. City Council,

Thank you for granting me the opportunity to express my thoughts with regards to the proposed legislation that would afford me the right to vote in local and federal elections.

Having the right to vote would go a long way in promoting and fostering the feeling of belonging to a society, that for so long many of us have felt cast out of and forgotten by for most, if not all of our lives.

Many of us have never owned a home, titled a car in our names or even paid taxes for that matter. Living that kind of lifestyle gave little or no reason to be concerned with the day to day decisions being made by our elected officials at the local or federal levels of government.

Granting the right to vote will not only spark a flame of interest with the issues being legislated, it will motivate us to become educated of the individuals elected to argue these issues on our behalf.

I only ask that while deciding on the right vote to make. Take into account the impact of having a vote will make on an entire

population of people who will no longer feel disenfranchised, ostracized or counted out. Instead we will instantly feel included, counted in, more importantly, we will feel like our vote counts.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely, praying to vote,

GREETINGS:

My name is I AM A DC PRISONER THAT'S BEEN INCARCERATED FOR (30) THIRTY PLUS YEARS. Most of this INCARCERATION I HAVE BEEN HOUSED IN THE FEDERAL BUREAU OF PRISONS (B.O.P.) WITH THE MAJORITY OF THAT TIME, MILES, CITIES, AND EVEN STATES AWAY FROM FAMILY.

I WAS THE AGE OF 22 WHEN I WAS COMMITTED TO THE D.C. CORRECTIONS. AT THAT STAGE OF LIFE I WAS UNEDUCATED AND IMPOVERISHED DUE TO DISINFRANCHIZATION...

WITH AGE AND EXPERIENCE I'VE GAINED WISDOM BY EDUCATING MYSELF WITH THE LIMITED RESOURCES OFFERED TO FEDERAL PRISONERS SUCH AS MYSELF. THIS HAS OPENED MY EYES TO MANY DIFFERENT, IMPORTANT ISSUES SURROUNDING THOSE WHO ARE INCARCERATED.

WHEN I BECAME AN INCARCERATED INDIVIDUAL AT THE AGE OF 22 I WAS UNAWARE OF THE SIGNIFICANCE RELATED TO HAVING AN ADVOCATOR, ENDORSER, OR POLITICAL CHAMPION, WHO WOULD ADDRESS AND SUPPORT THE ISSUES SURROUNDING THE JUSTICE - SYSTEM. ISSUES LIKE, INCLUDING OR HAVING A HUMANE APPROACH TOWARDS CORRECTIONS OR PROGRESSIVE PRISON REFORM, EDUCATIONAL AND ENHANCED VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND ANTI-RECIDIVISM PROGRAMS. THESE WHEN PROPERLY USED BY THE INCARCERATED I HAVE WITNESSED WORK BEST BY CURRENT AND EX-OFFENDERS.

PROGRAMS SUCH AS THESE AID OFFENDERS WITH COGNITIVE SKILLS TO MAINTAIN A CRIME FREE LIFE AS PRODUCTIVE CITIZENS. HOWEVER, NOT ALL FACILITIES OFFER A COMPLETE PACKAGE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL OR EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS THAT WILL PREPARE PRISONERS FOR RE-ENTRY. THIS LEAVES PRISONERS TO RE-OFFEND AND LET SOCIETY DOWN.

TIME AFTER TIME, I'VE WITNESSED IDEAL MINDS AND HANDS BECOME THE WORKSHOP OF THE MISCHIVIOUS. THIS EFFECTS THOSE WHO ARE PARTICIPATING IN THE LIMITED PROGRAMMING THAT'S AVAILABLE TO THEM, CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT THAT'S UNPRODUCTIVE. MANY TIMES THOSE WHO ARE PROGRAMMING GET LOCK DOWN AND PUNISHED FOR THE BAD APPLES UNWARRANTLY. CAUSING A REPENITENT PLACE TO BECOME THE CONTRARY, A HARDEN ENVIRONMENT PRODUCING THE WOLST MEMBERS OF ANY COMMUNITY, PLACING EVEN NON VIOLENT OFFENDERS IN PERIL.

PERSONALLY, I'VE MADE BAD CHOICES LONG AGO THAT I HAVE ACCEPTED RESPONSIBILITY FOR. AND THROUGHOUT THE MANY YEARS AND MULTIPLE COGNITIVE PROGRAMS, MY COMPREHENSION, COMPASSION AND RESPECT OF SELF AND OTHERS HAS CHANGED DRASTICALLY. YET I CAN'T HELP BUT BE CONCERNED ABOUT THE FUTURE OF MY PEERS. WILL THEY HAVE TO EXPERIENCE 20 YEARS IN PRISON TO RECEIVE PROGRAM AFTER PROGRAMS IN ORDER TO REACH THE STATE OR STAGE OF LIFE I AM AT NOW. WHEN POSITIVE CHANGE CAN BE MADE NOW ON THEIR FIRST TIME IN PRISON, IF EACH PRISON OFFER ALL THE PROGRAMS NEEDED FOR CHANGE. REMEMBER OVER 90% OF THOSE INCARCERATED WILL RETURN TO THEIR PREVIOUS COMMUNITIES AND EACH RETURNER SHOULD BE PROPERLY PREPARED WITH MENTAL AND EMPLOYMENT SKILLS TO BE PRODUCTIVE MEMBERS OF SOCIETY.

RIGHT NOW PRISONS THAT OFFER PRISONERS THIS COMPLETE PROGRAMMING PACKAGE DON'T EXIST, BUT THEY CAN, AND THEY WILL, WHEN THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR HOUSING BODIES CONSIDER EACH PRISONER COULD BE AND IS THEIR NEIGHBOR. THEN ADMINISTRATORS WILL TAKE A HUMANE APPROACH TOWARDS CORRECTIONS, AND RESTORE AS THEY RESTORE VOTING RIGHTS AND CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS TO THOSE WHO HAVE MADE MISTAKES IN SOCIETY. THE VERY SAME WAY MANY OF THE FOUNDERS OF THIS GREAT DEMOCRACY BY ENSURING EVERY CITIZEN EQUITY, LIBERTY AND PART OF THAT FREEDOM IS THE RIGHT TO VOTE. THE RIGHT TO ELECT OFFICIALS, ADMINISTRATORS, AND POLITICAL PERSONS WHO REPRESENT ONE'S INTERESTS WITHOUT MOLESTATION FROM ANY SOURCE!

IN CLOSING, THOUGH I AM A PRISONER, THE FACT REMAINS, THAT I AM STILL A UNITED STATES CITIZEN AND THAT FREEDOM TO VOTE IS A RIGHT I AM TO BE AFFORDED.

Respectfully,

10/10/19