
1.5 Million People Barred From Voting in Florida Primaries

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Around 1.5 million people in Florida will be unable to cast their vote on Tuesday in the Democratic and Republican parties primaries due to their criminal record.

"Right now in the state of Florida, an individual will have to wait either five or seven years before — after completing their sentence, before they're even allowed to just apply to have their voting rights restored," Desmond Meade of the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition told Democracy Now on Monday.

In efforts to modify Florida's felonies disenfranchisement policies, Meade is collecting signatures for a ballot initiative to amend the state constitution to permit individuals convicted for nonviolent crimes to automatically have their voting rights restored after finishing their prison sentence, parole and probation.

Members and campaigners from the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition announced on Tuesday via their Facebook page that they will be scattered at polling stations across the state in order to garner support for the petition.

Thus far, the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition has gathered more than two-thirds of the the roughly 68,000 signatures needed to prompt the state Supreme Court to consider proposing the measure to Florida voters in 2018.

According to 2014 report conducted by the Sentencing Project, felony disenfranchisement policies have a disproportionate impact on communities of color. Black Americans of voting age are four times more likely to lose their voting rights than the rest of the adult population,

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Florida has the highest number of disenfranchised voters. Over 10 percent of adults in the state cannot vote because they have a felony conviction.

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