

Know Your Rights Guide: Voting on Parole

Until 2021, Connecticut was the last state to distinguish between voting while on probation and while on parole. In 2021, because of advocacy from formerly incarcerated people and their loved ones, the legislature passed Public Act 21-2, which restored a person's right to vote while on parole, including special parole. As a result, approximately 4,000 people in Connecticut were reinfranchised.

How do I register to vote in Connecticut?

- To be eligible to vote, you must be:
 - (1) at least seventeen years old, turning eighteen years old before Election Day;
 - (2) a United States citizen living in Connecticut.
- You can register to vote either online through the Secretary of the State, by mail, in person at your Registrar of Voters, or in person at a specially designated place on Election Day
- The deadline to register to vote varies depending on how you are registering. In-person voter registration is available before and on Election Day. To register online, you need to register seven days before the election. To register by mail, you need to postmark your registration seven days before the election.
- You can confirm your voter registration status using the voter lookup tool on the Secretary of the State's website.

Can I register to vote in Connecticut if I have a criminal record?

- If you have completed your sentence and have been released from prison, you may register to vote, even if you are still on parole or probation.
- You would NOT be eligible to vote with a criminal record in the following situations:
 - Federal or Out of State: convicted of a felony AND committed to confinement in a federal or out-of-state prison
 - State: convicted of a felony AND committed to confinement in a correctional institution or facility
 - Return to confinement: if you regain your right to vote once released from prison but return to prison, you will again lose your right to vote while incarcerated. You would need to re-register to vote after being released from prison.
 - If you have been convicted of a violation of Title 9 of the Connecticut Election Statutes, then you cannot restore your right to vote until discharged from probation and/or parole



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If I'm living with a record, how do I restore my right to vote?

- To register to vote, you can get a voter registration card at any public library, the Department of Motor Vehicles, the Department of Social Services, any other voter registration agency, or by contacting your town's Registrar of Voters.
- Fill out the voter registration card and submit the card, either in person or by mail, to the Registrar of Voters of the town where you live.
- If you do not receive a confirmation within three weeks, contact your town's Registrar of Voters.

What are my rights on Election Day?

- If the polls close while you're still in line, stay in line—you have the right to vote.
- If you make a mistake on your ballot, ask for a new one.
- If the machines are down at your polling place, ask for a paper ballot.
- If you run into any problems or have questions on Election Day, call the Election Protection Hotline:
 - English: 1-866-OUR-VOTE / 1-866-687-8683
 - Spanish: 1-888-VE-Y-VOTA / 1-888-839-8682
 - Arabic: 1-844-YALLA-US / 1-844-925-5287
 - For Bengali, Cantonese, Hindi, Urdu, Korean, Mandarin, Tagalog, or Vietnamese: 1-888-274-8683

What if my name does not appear on the list of registered voters on Election Day?

- Voters are entitled to a provisional ballot, even if their name does not appear on the voter rolls. After the election, election officials will determine whether you are qualified to vote and are registered. If so, your provisional ballot will be counted.
- Ask the poll worker to double-check for your name on the list of registered voters. Make sure to spell your name out for the poll worker.
- If your name is not on the list, ask if there is a supplemental list of voters.



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What if my name does not appear on the list of registered voters on Election Day?

- If the poll worker still cannot find your name, confirm that you are at the correct polling place:
 - Request that the poll workers check a statewide system (if one is available) to see if you are registered to vote at a different polling place.
 - If the poll worker does not have access to a statewide system, ask them to call the main election office.
 - You can also call 1-866-OUR-VOTE and ask for help verifying your proper polling place.
 - If you are registered at a different location, in most instances you will have to travel to that location to cast a regular ballot.
 - If the poll worker still cannot find your name or if you cannot travel to the correct polling place, ask for a provisional ballot.

How is voter disenfranchisement related to racial justice?

- Nationally, about 5.85 million Americans living with a record are prohibited from voting.
- CT has taken some good steps to improve voting rights for people living with a record, but our state still leaves some people behind. In CT, people who are incarcerated pre-trial or who are incarcerated on a misdemeanor conviction ARE allowed to vote. But people who are incarcerated on a felony conviction are not.
- In CT, Black people make up 11 percent of the state's population, but, because of systemic racism, are 41 percent of the incarcerated population.
- Between 6 and 8% of CT residents are living with a felony conviction, but because of systemic racism, among Black adult men, the rate is between 25 and 31%.
- If someone is banned from voting because of their incarceration status, they not only can't vote for political candidates, but can't weigh in on constitutional amendments that can appear on the ballot.

The ability to vote is essential for people living with a record to reconnect to civic life, engage with the community, and become empowered members of society. This contributes to people on the inside remaining more connected to the world, more successful re-entry, and helps people to avoid going back to prison.

