

## Voting Rights: The State Supreme Court is deciding if ex-felons can regain voting rights

Up until recently, persons convicted of a felony have lost their right to vote in Washington until they have completed all the conditions of their sentence, including:

- Serving time
- Completing probation
- Paying all legal financial obligations

### **King County Court rules in favor of voting rights for ex-felons**

On March 27, 2006, the King County Superior Court struck down the Washington law that denies the right to vote to thousands of ex-felons solely because they owed court-imposed fines.

While this is a landmark decision and a great victory for low-income people with felony convictions, the Secretary of State has issued an appeal to this ruling. This means that the State Supreme Court must rule on this decision, ultimately deciding if ex-felons who are unable to pay off fines, can regain their voting rights.

### **Should I register to vote?**

Individuals with a felony conviction - who have satisfied all conditions of their sentence except for outstanding legal financial obligations - have a couple options to consider if they wish to register to vote:

\* Wait until the Supreme Court decides the appeal before registering to vote.

\* Attempt to register to vote now. There may be practical problems with this approach, however. If the Supreme Court ultimately reverses the King County court decision, any voter registrations made by ex-felons would be cancelled. Also, it is unknown whether all county auditors will accept the registrations based only on a King County ruling that has not yet been affirmed by the State Supreme Court.

### **FACT:**

It is estimated that about 150,000 Washingtonians have lost their right to vote, which is about 3.7% of the eligible voting population.

### **FACT:**

Over 20% of Washington's male African-American population cannot vote due to a felony conviction.

### **FACT:**

Over 27,000 Washingtonians have had their right to vote suspended due to court ordered fines they were unable to pay.

**If you have served time and want more information on your voting rights, contact the ACLU of Washington at 206-624-2180  
[legal@aclu-wa.org](mailto:legal@aclu-wa.org) • [www.aclu-wa.org](http://www.aclu-wa.org)**



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Fighting to ensure everyone in Washington State is able to meet their basic needs and have the opportunity to prosper.