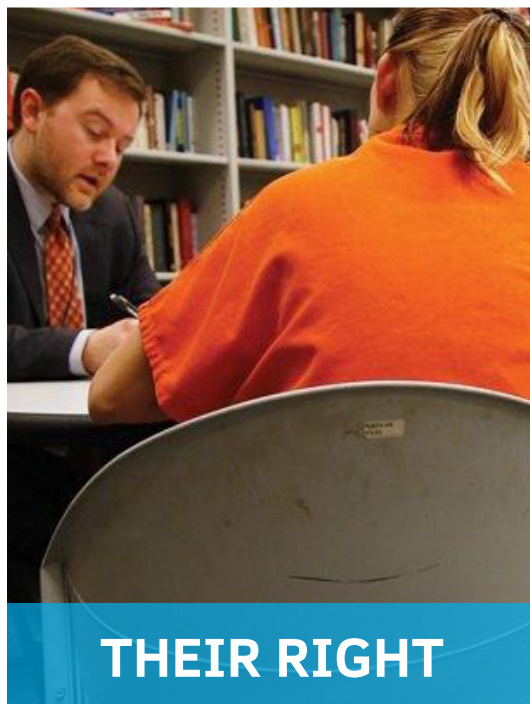


# L.A. FREE THE VOTE Toolkit

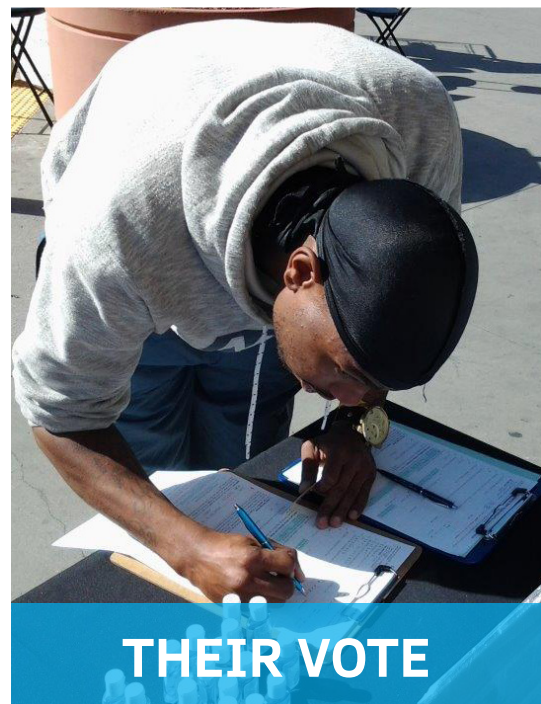
★ *Every Vote Counts, Every Voter Matters.* ★



**THEIR VOICE**



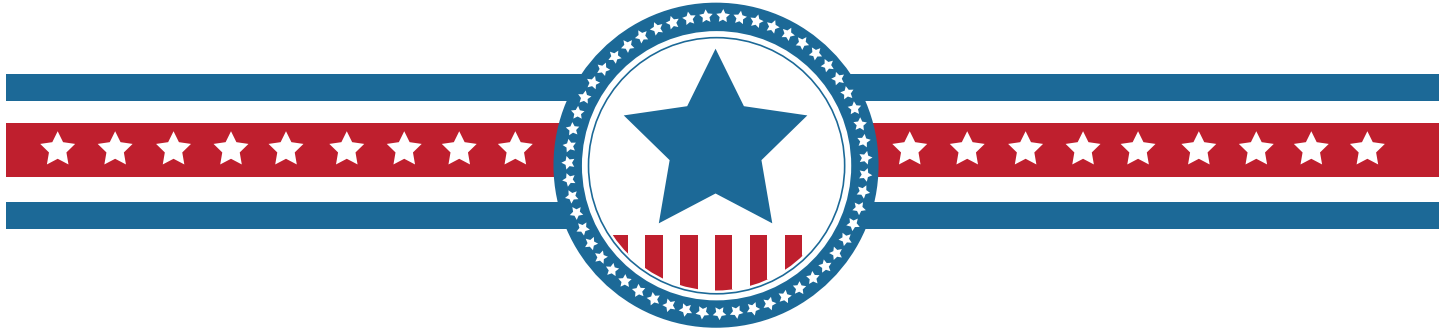
**THEIR RIGHT**



**THEIR VOTE**



# Why Voter Registration and Civic Participation Matters for Justice-Involved Populations



In 2012, California ranked 45th in voter registration. Within Los Angeles County, there are **1.1 million residents** who are eligible to vote, but who remain unregistered. People within the justice-system have been particularly disconnected from the electoral process. As an agency serving justice-involved populations, your Department is uniquely positioned to proactively increase the number of voters in Los Angeles County through registration opportunities.

A major civic participation barrier for justice-involved individuals is the misperception that they are ineligible to vote due to a criminal record or incarceration. **In California, people with misdemeanor convictions can vote and people who are incarcerated or who have felony convictions may be able to vote in most cases, unless they are serving a state prison sentence.** Lack of information and education on where and how to register to vote is a major obstacle. Since your Department communicates and interacts directly with justice-involved populations, it has been identified by the Board of Supervisors as one of several partners in a taskforce named "L.A. Free the Vote" and convened by the Office of Diversion and Reentry (ODR) and Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk (RR/CC), to engage eligible individuals regarding voting rights, provide voter registration opportunities and offer a path to participation.

Why is "L.A. Free the Vote" and your commitment to democracy important to the electoral process? Issues debated by candidates and promoted through the initiative process directly relate to policies and services that impact everyone, including justice-involved populations. By providing voter registration and civic participation opportunities, agencies such as the Alternate Public Defender, Office of Diversion and Reentry (ODR), Probation Department, Public Defender and Sheriff Department are affording eligible citizens the chance to use the power of their vote to have a say in how local, state and federal government serves them.

By working together to register eligible justice-involved individuals, the number of registered voters throughout Los Angeles County is dramatically increased. Voter registration allows many to become civically engaged and empowered, helping to end the perception of second-class citizenship. As taskforce Departments and agencies, this initiative allows the County to achieve its goal of service excellence. Ultimately, becoming a registered voter not only grants your clients a voice, it also improves the democratic process, which benefits all our communities, and helps to reduce recidivism.

# Voter Registration Eligibility



People with justice-involved backgrounds tend to be less connected with the electoral process. This is primarily due to the lack of understanding of who is eligible to vote. The chart below shows the supervision status and whether or not someone is eligible to register and vote:

SUPERVISION STATUS	CAN I VOTE? (Note: You must also be age 18 or older by the next Election Day, a U.S. citizen, and a California resident)
Currently incarcerated in California state prison	<b>NO</b>
On California State parole	<b>YES</b>
On probation (informal or formal)	<b>YES</b>
Under post-release community supervision (PRCS)	<b>YES</b>
Under mandatory supervision	<b>YES</b>
Currently incarcerated in county jail	<b>IT DEPENDS:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Because jail time is a condition of your probation: <b>YES</b></li> <li>• Because you were sentenced to serve time in jail (not as part of a “split” sentence): <b>YES</b></li> <li>• Because of a felony sentence with a “split sentence” that combines jail and probation time on Mandatory Supervision: <b>YES</b></li> <li>• Because of an “AB 109” felony conviction with PRCS supervision to follow: <b>YES</b></li> <li>• Because of a parole violation: <b>YES</b></li> <li>• Because you have been convicted and sentenced of a felony and are awaiting to be transferred to federal or state prison: <b>NO</b></li> </ul>
Pending felony charge(s) (you’re charged, but not yet convicted)	<b>YES</b>
Serving a sentence in jail or on probation due to a misdemeanor conviction.	<b>YES</b>

## Pre-Registration:

Additionally, minors who are 16 or 17 years of age can pre-register to vote. They will be unable to vote until they turn 18, however, pre-registration allows for completion of the registration process.

## Passage of Proposition 17 (2020):

Following the passage of Proposition 17 in the November 3, 2020 Presidential General Election, the California Constitution was amended to allow those on parole the right to vote.

# Board of Supervisors Actions



In **February 2018**, the Board of Supervisors instructed a set of County agencies and other stakeholders to develop a countywide plan for voter education, registration and civic participation of eligible justice-involved youth and adults. In response, the Office of Diversion and Reentry (ODR) and the Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk, along with stakeholder partners, recommended a variety of efforts to increase engagement. The primary efforts included expanding voter registration opportunities to as many justice-involved and eligible residents as possible in the coming months and beyond.

In **July 2018**, the Board of Supervisors passed a motion creating a taskforce with a primary focus of offering eligible justice-involved voters opportunities for voter registration, education and civic participation. Although the taskforce engages voters at various points in the justice system, the main priority is registering eligible voters on probation and post-release community supervision.

Text of the July 24th motion is found on the next page.

## LA Free the Vote



**Mission Statement:** LA Free the Vote aims to make LA County a national leader in systematically offering voter registration to the justice-involved population and encouraging this population to vote. Recognizing that the justice-involved population sits at the intersection of multiple underserved communities, LA Free the Vote brings and intentional County government focus to proactively outreaching to this population whose voices are important to civic life.

For more information, please go to [www.lafreethevote.org](http://www.lafreethevote.org) and follow the taskforce at [@LAfreetheVote](https://twitter.com/LAfreetheVote) on Twitter and Instagram.

# Motion by Supervisors Mark Ridley-Thomas and Sheila Kuehl

July 24, 2018

## Creation of Voter Engagement Taskforce for Justice-Involved Populations

Civic engagement and voting are the cornerstones of democracy. Engaging all individuals in these efforts, including those with justice system-involvement, is critical. Voter engagement also serves as an important reentry and crime prevention strategy. On February 13, 2018, the Board of Supervisors approved a Ridley - Thomas – Kuehl motion instructing the Director of the Office of Diversion and Reentry (ODR), in collaboration with the Los Angeles County (County) Registrar Recorder/County Clerk (RR/CC), the Interim Public Defender, Alternate Public Defender, Chief Probation Officer, the Sheriff, the Chief Executive Officer, County Counsel, and community stakeholders, to develop a Countywide plan for voter education and registration of eligible justice-involved youth and adults, building on the RR/CC's "Voting While Incarcerated" program.

In response to the motion, a memo dated June 8, 2018 proposed the creation of a voter engagement taskforce (Taskforce) to strategize and guide voter education and registration efforts for justice-involved residents in the County. Conceptually, this Taskforce would be convened by ODR and RR/CC and include other relevant agencies and community-based organizations. The main goals of the Taskforce would be to: register justice-involved County residents in advance of the November 2018 general election; compile existing and create new marketing materials, such as posters, websites, and other public service announcements, on the value of civic engagement and voter rights for justice-involved people; guide and implement other recommendations in the June 8, 2018 response; and identify potential funding sources as needed.

While the County has a strong history of voter registration for justice-involved individuals, as evidenced by jail in-reach efforts led by the RR/CC and community-based organizations such as A New Way of Life, more coordination and outreach are needed to ensure meaningful access to the polls is a right experienced by all.

**WE THEREFORE MOVE** that the Board of Supervisors:

Instruct the Director of the Los Angeles County (County) Office of Diversion and Reentry and the Registrar Recorder/County Clerk to co-convene a voter engagement taskforce, comprised of the Sheriff's Department, the Probation Department, and all other relevant County Departments and community stakeholders, to strategize and guide voter education and registration efforts for justice-involved residents in Los Angeles County (County), and report back in writing in 120 days on: a) Efforts to register as many justice-involved County residents as possible in advance of the November 2018 election; b) Tracking mechanisms to measure civic and voter engagement for justice-involved populations; and c) Implementation updates of the other strategies in the June 8, 2018 memo.

# Voter Registration Basics for "L.A. Free the Vote" Taskforce Agencies



## Who should offer voter registration?

The primary responsibility of "L.A. Free the Vote" is to offer voter registration opportunities to those eligible clients interacting with the Alternate Public Defender, Office of Diversion and Reentry (ODR), Probation Department, Public Defender and Sheriff Department. An assigned Deputy Registrar (duties explained on next page) is to be responsible for ensuring staff are knowledgeable, proactive and have sufficient materials. Staff at each branch of field office at each agency should be trained on how and when to offer voter registration.

Voter registration opportunities can also be offered at additional times, such as outreach events or mailings. ODR and the Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk is available to assist, as needed.

## When should voter registration be offered?

Voter registration can be offered at any number of opportunities. Some examples include when clients:

- Interact with a Probation Officer
- Interact with a Parole Officer
- Interact with a contracted provider for an ODR program
- Meet with a Public Defender or Alternate Public Defender attorney
- Change or move addresses, such as upon release from jail
- Change name
- Meet with a WDACS staff member for job placement or reentry

Additionally, voter registration may be offered to an accompanying adult when interacting with a minor. Pre-registration is available for minors who are 16 or 17 years of age.

***Need a reminder on how to complete a voter registration card? The voter registration PowerPoint provides step-by-step instructions.***

# Voter Registration Basics for "L.A. Free the Vote" Taskforce Agencies



## What are the responsibilities of the Deputy Registrar?

Each branch or field office's Deputy Registrar has the following duties and responsibilities:

- Ensure that the Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk (RR/CC) has his or her office and contact information listed on the internal database in order to properly track voter registration cards (VRC's). (If the office does not appear on the regular report listing voter registration numbers, contact the RR/CC to update.)
- Ensure that his or her office has a sufficient stock of VRC's, including appropriate number of non-English forms. Order all forms from the RR/CC for proper tracking.
- Ensure that completed VRC's are mailed to the RR/CC. It is recommended to mail completed VRC's the same day.
- Ensure that staff are trained and up-to-date on how to offer voter registration. This includes training any new staff who may not have been initially trained.
- Ensure staff are properly offering voter registration based on established guidelines and best practices. Staff should not screen a for eligibility, dissuade individuals from registering (although one can encourage) or influence an political party preference.
- Coordinate regular staff training. This can be done Department-wide or by individual office. The RR/CC is available to assist with any future training needs.
- Check voter registration progress and numbers based on RR/CC tracking. This allows programmatic monitoring for each individual office.

## Best Practices

- The justice-involved population is likely to experience a high-level of change of address. This is a great opportunity to update voter registration information. Correct address registration will avoid issues on Election Day and ensure the voter is assigned the polling place closest to their current residence.
- There is no penalty for re-registering. When a voter is in doubt... Register!
- If an error is made on voter registration card (VRC), void it and complete a new VRC. Avoid cross-outs, notations and other markings which may confuse Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk (RR/CC) data entry staff.
- The RR/CC is available to assist. Create an open line of communication with the RR/CC for a more successful voter registration program.
- Partnering is not limited to only what was discussed during training. The RR/CC is open to new ideas and approaches.
- The RR/CC recommends mailing completed voter registration cards (VRCs) daily, in order to avoid confusion and compliance concerns. All VRCs are postage-paid.
- Familiarize yourself with the process for ordering VRC's. Always order from the RR/CC.
- VRCs are available in English, plus Chinese, Hindi, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Spanish, Tagalog, Thai and Vietnamese. Maintain a sizable stock of English and Spanish VRC's, as well as any language predominant in the area your office services. Additionally, it is recommended to have a few forms in all available languages on hand.
- Distribute any internal policy or other document(s) to make staff aware of the taskforce, Board motion and agency's participation.
- The RR/CC holds quarterly Community & Voter Outreach Committee (CVOC) meetings where community-based organizations and County entities meet to discuss access to voting and elections. If interested, contact the RR/CC.
- In addition to this booklet, promotional materials with specific taskforce branding, created by the RR/CC, are available for your office. To request materials, contact the RR/CC.



## Quick Reference Guide for Staff Offering Voter Registration

- 1 Provide customers the opportunity to register to vote at the following times:
  - Assisting clients with completing any necessary paperwork.
  - When clients have changed permanent residential address.
  - When clients have legally changed their name.
- 2 Provide voter registration opportunities to an adult who is completing paperwork or meeting on behalf of a minor.
- 3 Offer pre-registration opportunities to eligible 16 or 17 year old clients.
- 4 Mail completed voter registration cards (VRC's) to the Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk (RR/CC) daily. Postage is paid – simply drop in an outgoing mailbox!
- 5 Monitor supplies to ensure a sufficient stock of VRC's. Notify your office Deputy Registrar if you are running low on VRC's. This includes VRC's in all available languages.

The Deputy Registrar for your office is:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Extension: \_\_\_\_\_

 CUT HERE

SAVE FOR YOUR REFERENCE

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Extension: \_\_\_\_\_

SAVE FOR YOUR REFERENCE

## Contact Information



### Office of Diversion and Reentry (ODR):

Vanessa Martin  
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Celia Harris  
Program Manager  
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### Registrar-Recorder County Clerk (RR/CC):

Jeff Klein  
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Harnell Harper  
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