

## **Georgia Senate Study Committee on Examining Voting Rights for Non-Violent Felony Offenders**

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### **Executive Summary:**

When we learned about this 2019 opportunity from Senate Study Committee Chair Randy Robertson, my students and I jumped at the opportunity to provide the committee with some research on the subject. Attached are the summaries of findings from the LaGrange College researchers. Expanded reports from these undergraduates can be found in subsequent sections.

### **Section A: Ex-Felony Offender Voting Rights & USA States vs. Other Democratic Countries (page 3)**

Just as there are a variety of states with a variety of policies toward former felony offenders and voting rights, so too is there variation in these policies among other democratic countries.

### **Section B: Ex-Felony Offender Voting Rights & Crime Rates (page 6)**

States which have provided more voting rights to ex-felons (in prison and upon release) have lower crime rates than states which do more to restrict voting by former felony offenders, though the statistical significance is slight at best. But granting these voting rights do not increase crime.

### **Section C: Ex-Felony Offender Voting Rights & Recidivism Rates (page 8)**

States that grant ex-felony offenders the right to vote in prison or upon release have recidivism rates no different from states that are more restrictive with the vote to ex-felons.

### **Section D: Ex-Felony Offender Voting Rights & Background Checks (page 11)**

Some states have tough background checks (more than 7 years) on ex-felons, while others have shorter background checks upon those recently released from prison after committing a felony. Neither type of state is more likely to grant an ex-felon voting rights any sooner than the other.

### **Section E: Ex-Felony Offender Voting Rights & State-Level Corruption (page 13)**

Granting voting rights to ex-felons before or immediately after prison do not have higher rates of corruption, both among officials convicted (per capita) and the quality of anti-corruption laws.

### **Section F: Ex-Felony Offender Voting Rights & Voter Fraud (page 16)**

States which grant ex-felons voting rights back sooner after prison are slightly less likely to have cases of voting fraud, as documented by the conservative organization Heritage Foundation. The results are statistically significant, though not at the strongest levels.

### **Section G: Ex-Felony Offender Voting Rights & Barriers to Voting (page 18)**

Some consider restrictions on ex-felons voting to be a sort of barrier to voting. And these have shown the potential to significantly alter voting turnout in the past (in 2010, though not so much in 2018). Yet there is no statistical relationship between states which enacted voting barriers in the last decade and states that are more restrictive of the voting rights of former felons.

### **Section H: Ex-Felony Offender Voting Rights & Impact Upon Elections (page 23)**

If voting rights were established for ex-felons all across the country it would have only made a difference in five states: New Hampshire, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan and Florida. And in the 2016 election, that would have put the outcome of the election in doubt, as no candidate would have received 270 Electoral College vote.

### **Section I: Ex-Felony Offender Voting Rights & Conservative Vote Percentage (page 26)**

The more conservative a state is, the less likely a state is to provide ex-felons the right to vote, at least until they have completed parole, probation, and perhaps some waiting period and a petition to vote.

### **Section J: Ex-Felony Offender Voting Rights & Republican Votes in the 2016 Election (page 28)**

States that voted for President Donald Trump in 2016 were significantly more likely to restrict the voting rights of former felons, and those results are statistically significant.

### **Section K: Ex-Felony Offender Voting Rights & Group Support...Age, Gender, Ethnicity & Political Party (page 31)**

A poll of Floridians concerning a 2018 election referendum on voting rights for ex-criminals revealed that gender is not a significant factor in support or opposition on this ballot initiative, as men and women supported the bill in equal numbers. Though younger people are more supportive of the referendum enfranchising voting rights for those convicted of a crime (and older people are less supportive, it is not a big factor (all age groups backed the bill). A majority of African Americans supported the ballot initiative, as did whites and Hispanics but not Asian-Americans. Democrats were more supportive than the GOP of this Florida referendum.

### **Section L: Ex-Felony Offender Voting Rights & Religion (page 34)**

There is a relationship between states which have a higher level of residents calling themselves “highly religious” and that state’s denial of voting rights to ex-felons in prison or upon release, though some allow this to be restored after parole, probation, and possibly other states.

## **Section A: Ex-Felony Offender Voting Rights & USA States vs. Other Democratic Countries**

By Jason Timms, Political Science Major, LaGrange College

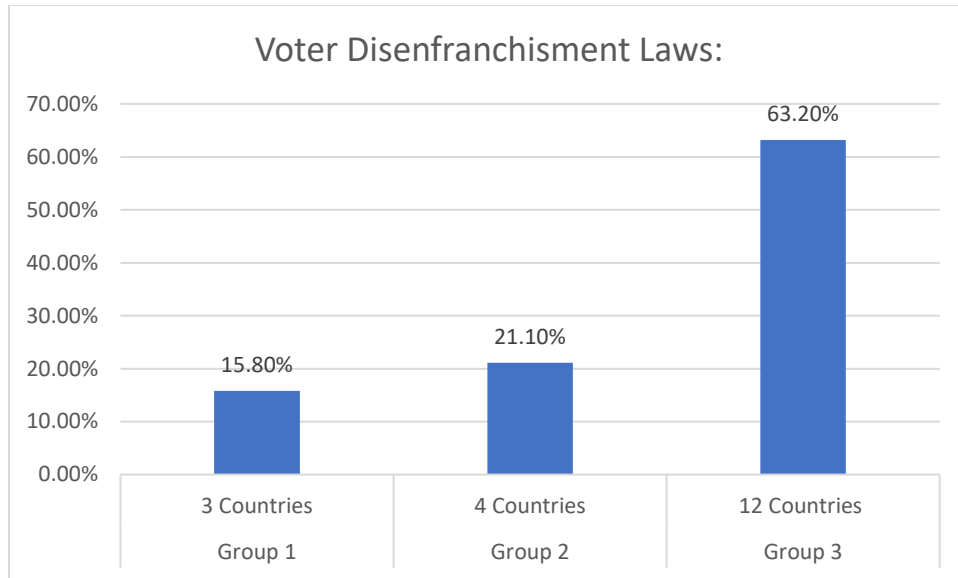
**Summary Findings:** The democratic countries that were observed have been found to be as different in individuality as the United States and should be observed individually instead of holistically just as diverse as those of the U.S.

Topic: When looking at many of the “hot button” topics of the current political climate, it is hard to deny that voting rights of convicted felons is forefront for many individuals and organizations. To take away the voting rights of a convicted criminal is known as disenfranchisement. Disenfranchisement is known as the removal of certain rights of an individual, but in this case will be referenced to for voting rights.

Literature: The reasons that have been given for voter disenfranchisement have been vast. One might think that the intention have been solely for political reasons, but other have a more social and personal reason in mind. One look was that of voter disenfranchisement and racism. One correlation made has been the voter disenfranchisement and possible racist links between South Africa and the United States (Brock, 2016). There are also those that claim voter disenfranchisement is to be considered cruel and unusual punishment (Heath, 2017). The argument was that the rights of an individual are not one that should be held hostage as a punishment, because those who have paid for their crimes are still subject to the rule of those elected official. Then there are those that state we should be allow those who are currently incarcerated to vote as they are allowed to in many other democratic nations (Paikowsky, 2019).

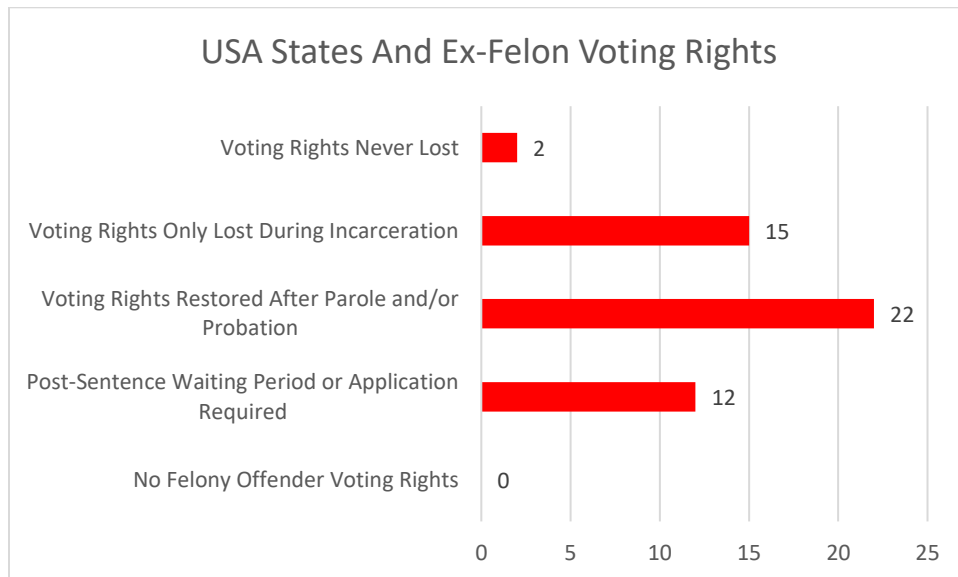
Theory and Hypothesis: When one is investigating into a matter, it is very important to establish a hypothesis and theory. A hypothesis being an abstract relationship between two or more variables and hypothesis to be a more specific and testable relationship between variables. For this study the hypothesis will be; the United States has tougher treatment of ex-criminals than other democratic countries. The independent variable would be the country or countries in question, and the dependent variable would be the treatment of their ex-criminals. The hypothesis is this: the United States allows less ex-criminals to vote than other democratic countries. The independent variable in this would be the country being observed, and the dependent is if the ex-criminals are allowed to vote in the country.

Methodology: The data was taken by looking at various countries that are democratic. The countries were categorized by their voting laws for those who have been convicted of a crime. The countries are from many areas of the world, many including Europe. Once analyzed, the countries were divided into three different categories. The countries that were found to have strict voting laws for convicted criminals were placed into group one. The countries that had some form of voter disenfranchisement, but still allowed some or many convicted criminals to vote were placed into group two. Group number three was for those countries who did not enforce any voter disenfranchisement.



Data: When looking at the countries in question, I found that there three countries (Australia, New Zealand, Taiwan) having strictly enforced disenfranchisement laws coming to 15.8 percent. There were four countries (U.K. Italy, France Netherlands) that have partial voting disenfranchisement coming to 21.1 percent, and twelve countries (Ireland, Germany, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Montenegro, Spain, Switzerland, Canada) that enforce no voting disenfranchisement coming to 63.2 percent. This means that 36.9% of the observed countries observe some form of voter disenfranchisement.

This chart shows how divers state policies are when it comes to ex-felon voting rights.



**Results:** When one observes the data given, it can be seen that even though many of the countries have a similar policy take on the issue, it is not a unanimous conclusion to allow ex-criminal voting. This may come as a surprise, especially when noting that one of the nations with total

disenfranchisement is Australia, a well know, strong friend to democracy and strong ally to the U.S. When looking at this data it is apparent that one is not able to account for democracy to be the sole deciding factor in whether or not a country will have harsh, partial, or no voter disenfranchisement. We must consider the fact that many of the democratic countries that have been observed are as vastly different as the states that are in America. When looking at the laws that are present in these countries, one must realize that they are as autonomous as the separate states that are present in these United States. When using the example of other countries, we can take note that they are as different and unique in their policy and laws.

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## Section B: Ex-Felony Offender Voting Rights & Crime Rates

By Tia Braxton, Political Science Major, LaGrange College

**Summary Finding:** There is a statistical relationship between higher crime rates per state and states that are harder on felons (not a strong one, but still slightly significant).

**The Issue:** There is a concern about a connection between the crime rates per state and states that are harder on felons, this is connected to voting because allowing felons the freedom to vote always them more freedoms which could deter them from re-committing crimes

**The Subject Literature:** Ernest Van Den Haag in his article *Could Successful Rehabilitation Reduce The Crime Rate* he writes that “If all criminals were recidivists, total rehabilitation would reduce the crime rate to zero. But recidivists start as first offenders”.

Terry Kirby from The Guardian wrote an article titled “Road to recovery: Why rehabilitation matters to us all, where he wrote “The rehabilitation of drug users is important not just for addicts, but for society as a whole, reducing crime rates and strengthening communities. He talked with the National Treatment Agency for Substance Misuse (NTA), while focusing on drug related crimes, and the NTA was asked what the purpose was of rehabilitating drug users was and they said “..., the successful treatment of addicts has wider ramifications than a drug-free future for those individuals. It makes communities better places to live, by reducing addiction-fueled acquisitive crime and keeping users off the streets.” Also Martin Barnes, chief executive of the charity Drugscope is quoted saying “We need to focus on health outcomes as well as improvements in crime figures.”

In her article “Florida restores voting rights to 1.5 million citizens, which might also decrease crime” Victoria Shineman states that “My research finds that when Virginia restored voting rights, ex-offenders became more trusting of government and the criminal justice system. These attitudes are known to make it easier for citizens to re-enter society after being released from prison and also decrease their tendency to commit additional crimes.”

**The Science: An Abstract Applicable Theory, And A Pair Of Specific Testable Hypotheses**

**Theory:** When felons get out of prison they are more likely to commit crimes if they have less freedom and choice.

*Independent Variable:* Amount of freedom and rights for ex-criminals.

*Dependent Variable:* Whether ex-felons commit crimes again.

**Hypothesis A:** States that are more restrictive on ex-felon voting rates have a higher crime rate

*Independent Variable:* Amount of state voting rights for ex-felons

*Dependent Variable:* The state’s crime rate

**Data:**

*Independent Variable:* Data on voting rights for felony offenders comes from the National Conference of State Legislatures (2018). States are classified by two categories: Group 1: whether or not the state allows felony offenders the right to vote either in prison (Maine and Vermont) or among the 14 states which allow felony offenders the right to vote after being released. Then there is Group 2, of which there are 22 state which allow felony offenders the right to vote after parole and/or probation, and 12 states which do not allow felony offenders the

right to vote after prison, parole and probation and an additional waiting period, without special permission after successful reapplication (Dr. Tures).

*Dependent Variable (A):* Data on crime rates per state is collected from the FBI (2018). They looked at all 50 states and calculated it per every 100,000 population.

Statistics: I compare both groups of states: (1) the states that allow felony offenders to vote during and after prison and (2) the states which allow them to vote after parole, probation, and a waiting period, and special permission. This was then compared with crime rate by state using a difference of means test to compare the average ranking of both groups.

Results: When looking at crime rates per state, the average crime rate of states allowing more felony offender voting right (2726.69 per 100,000) differs from the average crime rate of the states allowing fewer felony offender voting rights (2414.96 per 100,000). The results are statistically significant, but just under the .100 level (0.099), indicating a weak but significant statistical relationship.

Analysis: If the state of Georgia grants more voting rights to felony offenders, it is likely that it would have no effect on the crime rates.

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## Section C: Ex-Felony Offender Voting Rights & Recidivism Rates

By Ben Womack, Political Science Major, LaGrange College

### Summary Findings:

Researchers reviewed empirical data on recidivism rates and felon voting rights in different states in order to discover if there was a relationship between the two. It was discovered that there is not a significant relationship between states allowing released felons to vote and recidivism rates.

### The Issue:

The Price of an Ineffective Criminal Justice System: Felony offenders in the United States often get portrayed in a negative light, even after they have served their sentence. The degradation of released felons, regardless of the morality of the scenario, could be resulting in negative consequence for both convicted felons and law-abiding citizens alike. This raises the question: is the negativity surrounding felons after their sentences are served warranted, or are there ways states could reform the penal system to change the trajectory of felons' lives after they are released from prison? This is often a suppressed issue and is not at the top of many people's political agenda; however, a high crime rate affects not just the victims of the crimes, but those committing said crimes, and state taxpayers as well (Cocklin 1977). For these reasons, no one wants people committing crimes, and if there are changes that could be made in the justice system that could lead to a decrease in crime rates, it could save the state millions. According to a Georgia Department of Corrections report, the state of Georgia spent over 1.2 billion dollars on state prisons in 2017. With an average cost of just under 24,000 dollars per prisoner per year, the state would save a million dollars a year for every 42 people not in a state prison; a sum of money that would silence even the harshest critics of justice system reform (Allocation of Cost to Inmates 2017).

A Progressive Trend in Criminal Justice Reform: High crime rates hurt those committing the crime, the victims of the crime, and the state's budget. So, what can be done to decrease the amount of felony offenders in the state of Georgia? One reform some states are implementing is reversing felon disenfranchisement. According to Dawson-Edwards (2008), "the philosophical confusion on the purpose of punishment contributes to the felon voting debate in that the arguments for and against criminal disenfranchisement arguably have been rooted in a philosophy of punishment." But, she contests this by asserting that the world is quickly moving towards a more progressive view of the punishing crime and towards criminal justice reform. So, shouldn't this mindset of continuous punishment via disenfranchisement change, especially if the success of said change could be measured in dollars (Dawson-Edwards 2008)? Georgia's southern neighbor, Alabama, is evidence of this moral evolution. "In May 2017, the Alabama state legislature passed House Bill 282 (H.B. 282), which recognized the eligibility of tens of thousands of ex-felons to vote (*Harvard Law Review* 2017)". This amendment to Alabama's state constitution provided a definition for crimes of "moral turpitude", a term which was previously undefined and caused many felons to forfeit their voting rights if they fit the open interpretation of the phrase according to a judge. By defining "moral turpitude" Alabama "recognized the eligibility of tens of thousands of ex-felons to vote (*Felon Disenfranchisement*



2018).” It is no secret that southern, primarily conservative states are often the last to enact reforms on social issues, but if Alabama has taken a step towards criminal justice reform, could Georgia be next (Beauchamp 2013)?

### **The Theory- Justice Reform Will Result in Better Rehabilitation for Felons:**

A criminal justice system should fulfill three purposes: punish convicted criminals for their crimes, provide a safer community by removing criminals from civilian life, and provide a way for convicted criminals to be rehabilitated back into a productive life after they are released from prison (Cocklin 1977). A theory could be defined as a broad and abstract connection between variables. The theory this paper will examine is: criminal justice system reforms such as allowing released felons more of the same liberties as law-abiding citizens could result in a more effective criminal justice system.

### **Hypothesis and Variables:**

In order to find support a theory, a hypothesis test must be conducted based off of the theory. A theory could have multiple hypothesis tests spawn from it; essentially, one could examine multiple variables from one theory. The independent variable (IV) being examined, or the variable that is being manipulated, is whether or not states allow felons to vote after they are released from prison. The dependent variable (DV), or the variable that is possibly affected by the independent variable, is the likelihood of felons to recidivate after they are released from prison. This paper will operate under the null hypothesis that recidivism rates (DV) will be the same in states that allow released felons to vote as states that don't allow released felons to vote (IV).

### **Research Design:**

In order to discover whether states that allowed felons to vote had lower rates of recidivism, data was gathered from [PrisonPolicy.org](http://PrisonPolicy.org) on recidivism rates by state and compared against voting rights data from the National Conference of State Legislatures (2018). Data on felon voting rights showed that Maine and Vermont allowed felons to vote while in prison and 14 other states and Washington D.C. allowed felons to vote after their sentence was served. For the purposes of the hypothesis test, these 17 total states, including D.C. were viewed as simply as states that allowed felons to vote.

Statistics: States were divided into two groups (A) recidivism rates of states that do not allow felons to vote, and (B) recidivism rates of states that do allow felons to vote. The mean rate of recidivism for both categories was then compared using a difference of means (t test).

Data Limitations: States often define recidivism differently, for example, one state may define a recidivist as someone who is simply rearrested or violated parole within a given time span, while another state may require a conviction to be defined as a recidivist. The time span in which one must be rearrested, violate parole, or be reconvicted to be defined as a recidivist also differs by state from 1 year, 3 years, and 5 years. It is also important to note that not all states had

recidivism data available, and the data collected on recidivism rates was published in years ranging from 2000 to 2009.

The Results: According to the difference of means test conducted on the variables, the difference was not significant. These states had a mean recidivism rate of 45.3875. States that did not allow felons to vote had a mean recidivism rate of 39.8308. The results were not statistically significant, ( $t = -1.03$ ), with the one tailed test results reading .1554. This means that the data supports the null hypothesis that there will be no difference in recidivism between states that allow felons to vote after they are released from prison and states that do not allow felons to vote.

Analysis: The results of the hypothesis test did not lend support to the theory that criminal justice system reform would result in better rehabilitation for felons, nor did it make it worse. However, it is worth noting that just because the data supported the null hypothesis that there would be no difference in rates of recidivism resulting from a state allowing felons to vote, the data also does not discredit the theory solely based off of one hypothesis test. It is also important to concede that only 8 of the 17 states, including D.C., that allowed felons to vote had reliable recidivism data available; thus, the sample size for group (B) was relatively small. In order to conduct a more accurate comparison, the definition of recidivism would need to be standardized nationally, and recidivism rates would need to be analyzed from the same years.

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## Section D: Ex-Felony Offender Voting Rights & Background Checks

By Natalie D. Glass, Political Science Major, LaGrange College

**Summary Finding:** We looked to see if states are more likely to grant voting rights to ex-felons based upon whether they are considered “felony-friendly or not.” But there is little connection between states with longer background checks and the enfranchisement of ex-felons.

**The Issue:** There is a question to see if non-violent and violent felony offenders are getting their voting rights reestablished, and how tough the state is in terms of longer or shorter background checks run.

**The Subject Literature:** Felony offenders in the United States are viewed very differently compared to normal citizens. This is even after they have committed the crime and served their time given to them by the courts. Their basic rights are stripped from them and they are not treated like US citizens. “Political, social and civil rights are fundamental to democratic citizenship (Marshall 1950). Arguably, the historical trend in the United States has been expansion of these sets of rights, often in response to contentious movements and in order to maintain vigilance against retrograde politics (Keyssar 2009). However, rather than an expansion of rights, persons with felony convictions tend to face a contraction of their civil liberties and freedoms (Holloway 2014; Keyssar 1009). These restrictions are known as the *collateral consequences* of a criminal conviction, which include the legal sanctions and restrictions imposed upon people because of their criminal record (Dawson-Edwards 2008; Heumann et al., 2005; Uggen and Manza, 2002).” So, we wonder, while they place these restrictions on criminals, do they gravitate toward states that are more lenient and polite or do they just stay close to home? That is the big question.

**The Science: An Abstract Applicable Theory, And A Pair Of Specific Testable Hypothesis**

**Theory:** Do violent and non-violent felony offenders face tougher treatment after being incarcerated, in terms of political rights and post-release treatment

*Independent Variable:* Treatment of ex-felons after prison

*Dependent Variable:* The granting of political rights after prison

**Hypothesis:** Are ex-felony offenders facing tougher background checks, and a tougher road to recover their voting rights?

*Independent Variable:* If non-violent and violent felony offenders are facing tougher background checks (more than 7 years) or not

*Dependent Variable:* Whether ex-felons receive their voting rights back upon release or not.

**Data:** To gather information I started researching states and their rights and rules for ex-felons. I found that there are twelve states that are classified as “felon friendly states”. They got this title since they limit background checks to seven years for ex-felons. The other thirty-eight states are giving lifelong background checks. There is one rule to this exception for the seven-year limit based on salary. California and Montana have a no salary cap, making it the same for every individual no matter the salary. Colorado and Texas have a \$75,000 salary cap, and New York a \$25,000 cap. The rest of the states which are Kansas, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, and Washington have a \$20,000 salary cap. This is the lowest cap that the states have placed.

Statistics: I compared the states that (1) give background check limits to seven years and (2) those who do not give background check limits at all. We are looking to see if felony offenders are more or less likely to move to the states that limit background checks. We use a difference of means (t-test) which compares the average rankings of both of these groups.

Results: When it comes to felony offenders it does not make a significant difference in the state that they choose to live in after incarceration. The “7 states” are courteous to their background checks but felons do not seem to change their patterns after incarceration.

Analysis: A difference of means test indicates that there is not a significant difference between the averages of both samples. This indicates that whether the policies are more lenient (a 7 year limit on background checks) or stringent (longer length background checks), there is no connection to states which are more lenient or stringent on voting rights for ex-felons.

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## Section E: Ex-Felony Offender Voting Rights & State-Level Corruption

By John A. Tures, Professor of Political Science, LaGrange College

**Summary Finding:** There is no relationship between states who provide early reestablishment of voting rights to felony offenders and political corruption in the state.

**The Issue:** There is a concern about a connection between the relationship between criminals and political corruption in general, and concerning voting in particular.

**The Subject Literature:** In his book *Predator Nation*, Charles H. Ferguson (2012: 24) writes “And it was also in the 1980s that America...start[ed] a thirty-year phase of consolidation, financial instability, large-scale criminality, and political corruption.” He adds “Even though hundreds of financial executives went to prison, dozens of financial firms were bankrupted by their executives’ corruption...” (Ferguson, 2012: 25). Moreover, Tatiana Kostadinova (2009: 691) finds “Perceptions of corruption corrode faith in the democratic process and consequently, depress voting.” Throughout the world, there is evidence of citizens selling their votes to make ends meet (Goldstein and Drybread, 2018). The issue is so widespread that you’ll find Tinabunan, Widodo and Ahmad (2018) arguing for the same rights to vote for those denied based on court convictions in Indonesia, in a physics journal!

Shapiro (1993: 557) documents how election officials disenfranchised voters in a variety of ways, with one’s criminal background as yet another means of denying people the right to vote. And Berry (2016) reveals that there is criminality in the absentee voting process, as gatherers collude with local election officials, something that affected a North Carolina congressional race in 2018 (Caldwell and Gardella, 2018). Despite all of this research, there is no tangible test of the evidence that states more generous in granting the right of ex-felons to vote will see any sort of increase or decrease in corruption within their state.

### The Science: An Abstract Applicable Theory, And A Pair Of Specific Testable Hypotheses

**Theory:** An increase in criminals participating in the political process could increase the level of corruption in politics

*Independent Variable:* The number of criminals participating in the political process

*Dependent Variable:* Level of corruption in politics.

**Hypothesis A:** If nonviolent felony offenders are allowed to vote in a state, there will be an increase in the number of government officials (per capita) removed for corruption in a state.

*Independent Variable (A):* Providing nonviolent felony offenders the right to vote after being released in a state.

*Dependent Variable (A):* The number of government officials (per capita) removed for corruption in a state.

**Hypothesis B:** If nonviolent felony offenders are allowed to vote in a state, the state's laws on anti-corruption will be weaker.

*Independent Variable (B):* Providing nonviolent felony offenders the right to vote after being released in a state.

*Dependent Variable (B):* The strength of a state’s laws on anti-corruption.

Data:

*Independent Variable:* Data on voting rights for felony offenders comes from the National Conference of State Legislatures (2018). States are classified by two categories: Group 1: whether or not the state allows felony offenders the right to vote either in prison (Maine and Vermont) or among the 14 states which allow felony offenders the right to vote after being released. Then there is Group 2, of which there are 22 state which allow felony offenders the right to vote after parole and/or probation, and 12 states which do not allow felony offenders the right to vote after prison, parole and probation and an additional waiting period, without special permission after successful reapplication.

*Dependent Variable (A):* Data on state corruption comes from Enten (2015). He ranks the states from 1-50 on the number of public officials convicted of corruption, with 1 being the most corrupt and 50 being the least corrupt.

*Dependent Variable (B):* Enten's (2015) data also ranks states from 1-50 based upon the "State Integrity Investigation," site, which rated each state's anti-corruption laws with journalist ranks.

Statistics: I compare how both groups of states: (1) those which allow felony offenders the right to vote during and after prison and (2) those which allow such votes after parole, probation, and an additional waiting period, and special permission. These are compared by rankings on corruption, both officials being convicted, and the quality of anti-corruption laws, using a difference of means (t-test) which compares the average rankings of both groups.

Results: When it comes to public official corruption per capita, the average ranking of the states allowing more felony offender voting rights (25.15) differs little from the average ranking of the states allowing fewer felony offender voting rights (23.93). The results are not statistically significant ( $t = 0.28$ ).

As for the strength of state anti-corruption laws, the group of states allowing for felony voting rights has a mean ranking (26.85) that does not significantly from the mean ranking (23.81) of the group of states granting fewer felony voting rights ( $t = 0.69$ ).

Analysis: If the state of Georgia passes legislation that provides greater voting rights to non-violent felony offenders, it is unlikely to see an increase in public corruption, or a watering down of state anti-corruption laws. There is likely to be no change in political corruption in the state.

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## Section F: Ex-Felony Offender Voting Rights & Voter Fraud

By Caleb Tyler, Political Science Major, LaGrange College

### **Analysis: Does a State's laws pertaining to non-violent felonies affect the amount of voter fraud in each state?**

By: Caleb Tyler, Political Science Major, LaGrange College

**Summary Finding:** States that have stricter laws against ex-felons voting have somewhat higher numbers of voter fraud cases per capita, on average.

**The Issue:** There is a concern that if non-violent offenders are allowed to vote, this will lead to higher numbers of voter fraud cases.

**The Subject Literature:** During a news segment Rosa Flores, a CNN correspondent, discussed a situation where the State of Florida changed their voting laws to allow non-violent felons to vote. "But one thing has been out of his reach ever since his conviction, the right to vote. Something forbidden for felons under Florida law until now. The sunshine state overwhelmingly approved an amendment allowing an estimated 1.5 million felons, who have served their sentences and ay probation or parole, to register to vote starting today. The new rights don't apply to those convicted of murder or violent sexual offenses. 1.5 million new voters in a state already infamous for razor thin margins elections and nail-biting recounts." (Flores 2019) This will provide a perfect test of my hypothesis. Florida was a state that had laws that could result in non-violent felons losing their vote permanently, but now shifted to giving them their right to vote back after prison probation, or parole. It will be interesting to see if this causes a rise in voter fraud or a decrease.

Many states are starting to do as Florida did and release some of the restrictions on non-violent offenders. "Despite these sharp statistics, in recent years, significant reforms in felony disenfranchisement policies have been achieved at the state level. Since 1997, 23 states have amended their felony disenfranchisement policies in an effort to reduce their restrictiveness and expand voter eligibility. These reforms include: Seven states either repealed or amended lifetime disenfranchisement laws, six states expanded voting rights to some or all persons under community supervision, and seventeen states eased the restoration process for persons seeking the right to vote restored after completing sentence." (McLeod 2018)

#### The Science: An Abstract Applicable Theory, And A Pair of Specific Testable Hypotheses

**Theory:** Is voter fraud by state affected by post-prison treatment of non-violent felony offenders?

*Independent Variable:* Treatment of former felony offenders

*Dependent Variable:* Amount of voter fraud by state.

**Hypothesis:** Does a state's individual voting laws pertaining to ex-felonies affect the amount of voter fraud cases?

*Independent Variable:* The type of voting rights a state permits for non-violent felony offenders.

*Dependent Variable:* Amount of voter fraud cases per state, per capita.

#### Data:

*Independent Variable:* My independent variable was what each state's non-violent felony laws were.

There are 5 different types of laws used in the US and I designated each one with a number. 0= May lose vote permanently. 1= Votes restored after prison, parole, and probation. 2= Vote restored after prison and parole. 3= Votes restored after prison. 4= Unrestricted voting rights. A separate binary measure combines categories 3 and 4 into a score of 1, and the other categories (0, 1 and 2) into a score of zero.



**Dependent Variable:** My dependent variable is the amount of voter fraud cases per capita. In this case, I calculated amount of voter fraud cases for every 100,000 people.

**Statistics:** I first figured out each state’s amount of voter fraud cases per capita to see which states had the highest voter fraud. After doing this, I categorized each of the states under each of their respective non-violent felony voting laws to determine if there was a correlation between voter fraud and non-violent felons being allowed to vote.

**Results:** In order to draw conclusions from the data that I collected, I calculated which state had the highest voter fraud per capita and which one had the lowest. The states with the highest voter fraud per capita was Minnesota (2.94), Iowa (1.79), and Mississippi. (1.36). Minnesotans have their vote restored after prison, parole, and probation. Iowans may lose their vote permanently. Mississippians also may lose their right to vote permanently.

The lowest amount of voter fraud per capita was in Vermont, Rhode Island, and Delaware. All of which had 0 per capita. Rhode Island restores voting rights after prison. Vermont and Maine have no voting restriction laws.

A second test looks that the binary measure of voting rights for ex-felons, and tests both categories on voter fraud. Overall, the states with the tougher measures against ex-felons are a little more likely, on average, to have cases of voter fraud. The relationship is statistically significant at the 90% threshold (t = 1.45).

Data Summary			
	A	B	Total
n	34	16	50
$\Sigma X$	0.0001882 <sup>1</sup>	0.0000497 <sup>1</sup>	0.0002380 <sup>1</sup>
$\Sigma X^2$	2.1920249 <sup>1</sup>	4.6289539 <sup>1</sup>	2.6549203 <sup>1</sup>
SS	0	0	0
mean	0	0	0

**Analysis:** The data I accrued points to the fact that states with stricter non-violent felon voting laws have higher rates of voter fraud. This could point to the fact that giving non-violent felons their votes back incentivize them to better uphold laws. Perhaps some ex-felons wouldn’t commit fraud to vote. However, this could also point to the fact that some states don’t enforce voter fraud as strictly and may could skew the date. In a future test the degree of voter fraud enforcement would need to be factored into this experiment.

Results					
Mean <sub>a</sub> - Mean <sub>b</sub>	t	df	P	one-tailed	two-tailed
0	+1.45	48		0.076781	0.153562

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## **Section G: Ex-Felony Offender Voting Rights & Barriers to Voting**

By Payton Smith, Political Science Major, LaGrange College

**Summary Finding:** There is a relationship between voting barriers and voter turnout rates in United States general elections. Voting barriers were significantly more likely to be a drag on voting turnout in 2010, but less so in 2018. Voting barriers were also unrelated to the barriers ex-felons face in trying to get their voting rights back.

**The Issue:** Non-Violent Felony Offenders are not the only ones that are facing disfranchisement and discrimination at the polls. Many of the famous and historical voting restrictions, such as poll taxes and literacy test, were struck down by the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (United States Congress, 1995). Despite these efforts, barriers are still up in many parts of the country, effecting American citizens' accessibility to the polls and their rights to cast a ballot.

**The Subject Literature:** Authors of *Barriers to the Ballot Box: Implicit Bias and Voting Rights in the 21st Century*, Arusha Gordon and Ezra D. Rosenberg, write "This year marks the 50th anniversary of the passage of the Voting Rights Act (VRA), a law that changed the voting rights landscape dramatically. Today the Jim Crow era of literacy tests and total denial of access to the ballot box for minorities is gone. Despite this positive push the authors continue to state, "Several states have recently implemented policies that threaten these gains" (Gordon, 24). One way that a group is being discriminated against at the polls according to Anthony Phillips and Natalie Deckard, the authors of the book *Felon Disenfranchisement Laws and the Feedback Loop of Political Exclusion: The Case of Florida*, is through Felony Disenfranchisement. "Felony disenfranchisement laws, legislation passed at the state level to restrict the voting rights of those who have been convicted of felony offenses, are particularly stringent in the USA when compared to other democracies and serve to exclude a specific demographic from the political community (Beckman 2009; Ewald and Rottinghaus 2009). While the individual's act of voting does not materially affect his or her particular life outcomes in that each vote has a generally negligible role in the actual passage of legislation (Riker and Ordeshook 1968), the symbolic value of disenfranchisement cannot be overstated. Lacking the ability to vote means existing without representation, and the disproportionate disenfranchisement of a community's members very strongly affects the representation accorded these communities" (Phillips, 3). Neelam Gohar, author of the book *Manipulative Voting Dynamics*, states "Voting is one of the most popular ways of reaching common decisions." It is hard to reach a decision that is common to the population, if the whole population is not accurately being represented in voting due to barriers.

### **The Science: An Abstract Applicable Theory, And A Pair Of Specific Testable Hypotheses**

**Theory:** Do certain types of government policies affect voter turnout in elections?

*Independent Variable:* Certain types of government policies

*Dependent Variable:* Voter turnout levels in elections.

**Hypothesis:** Do voting barriers, such as those Non-Violent Felony Offenders face, affect voter turnout?

*Independent Variable:* Voting barriers per state

*Dependent Variable:* Voter turnout rate per state

**Data:**

*Independent Variable:* The data used to determine voting barriers per state was from the Brennan Center for Justice. The center compiled data for all 50 states and determined which states have had restrictions on voting, dating back to the 2010 general election. The states are put into one category; those that have had voting restrictions since 2010 and those that have not.

*Dependent Variable:* Data on voter turnout was presented per state by Ballotpedia. Ballotpedia determined the percentage of residents of each state that voted in general elections, out of the entire state population. I looked at the state voting percentages for the 2010 general election and the 2018 general election. It is important to note, the voter turnout percentage for the state of Mississippi in the 2010 general election was not given by Ballotpedia. I gained this data from the United States Election Project. This was the only voter turnout rate that did not come from the Ballotpedia dataset.

**Statistics:** I began by simply ranking the states on whether they had restrictions on voting or not. If the Brennan Project determined the state had restrictions, the state received a 1 in ranking. If the Brennan Project determined the state did not have restrictions, the state received a 0. Because the Brennan Project for Justice gave me information regarding which states had voting restrictions dating back to 2010, I chose to look at whether voting barriers affected voter turnout in both the 2010 general election and the 2018 general election. For both elections, I took the two groups of states, (Rank 1) those with voting restrictions and (Rank 2) those without voting restrictions and compared the voter turnout by using a difference of means test, also known as a t-test.

**Results:** For the 2010 general election, the average voter turnout rate for states that have restrictions on voting (0.4259) is in fact lower than the average voter turnout rate for those states that do not have restrictions (0.4593). The results are statistically significant ( $t = -2.09$ ). There is a 98% chance of significance.

<i>Data Summary</i>			
	A	B	Total
n	25	25	50
$\sum X$	10.6470000	11.4819999	22.1289999
$\sum X^2$	4.602869	5.35882	9.961689
SS	0.0685	0.0854	0.1678
mean	0.4259	0.4593	0.4426

### *Results*

Mean <sub>a</sub> —Mean <sub>b</sub>	t	df	P	one-tailed	0.02097
-0.0334	-2.09	48		two-tailed	0.041940

On the other hand, for the 2018 general election. The average voter turnout rate for states that have restrictions on voting (0.5102) differs very little from the average voter turnout rate for those states that do not have restrictions (0.5243). The results are not statistically significant ( $t = -0.83$ ). There is only a 79% chance of significance.

<i>Data Summary</i>			
	A	B	Total
n	25	25	50
$\sum X$	12.7550000	13.1070000	25.8620000
$\sum X^2$	6.58529700	6.96868099	13.5539779
SS	0.0777	0.0969	0.1771
mean	0.5102	0.5243	0.5172

### *Results*

Mean <sub>a</sub> —Mean <sub>b</sub>	t	df	P	one-tailed	0.205324
-0.0141	-0.83	48		two-tailed	0.410648

<i>Data Summary</i>			
	A	B	Total
n	34	16	50
$\Sigma X$	18	7	25
$\Sigma X^2$	18	7	25
SS	8.4706	3.9375	12.5
mean	0.5294	0.4375	0.5

### *Results*

Mean <sub>a</sub> —Mean <sub>b</sub>	t	df	P	one-tailed	0.275664
0.0919	+0.6	48		two-tailed	0.551328

Yet our results show that states with barriers to voting are unrelated to whether or not a state grants any sort of restored voting rights to ex-felons in prison or immediately after being released.

**Analysis:** Voting restrictions can play a vital role in voter turnout in the United States general election. If laws were passed to break down these barriers for voters, such as Non-Violent Felony Offenders, voter turnout in general elections could increase. In continuing this study I would want to look at several other elections and various types of elections.

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## Section H: Ex-Felony Offender Voting Rights & Impact Upon Elections

By: Jaydon T. Parrish, Undeclared Major, LaGrange College

**Summary Finding:** There is a positive relationship between allowing felons to vote, and an increase in the voter turnout rate to the point in which it could have potentially altered the results of the 2016 General Election.

**The Issue:** Could enough ex-felons voting make a difference in a state election, and a national election? We test the results on the 2016 election and the states in the Electoral College.

**The Subject Literature:** According to Jeff L. Manza and Christopher J. Uggen (2004), view felon disenfranchisement as “a growing impediment to universal political participation in the United States because of the unusually severe state voting restrictions imposed upon felons and the rapid rise in criminal punishment since the 1970s.” In addition, the pair predict through models and research “that about 35 percent of disenfranchised felons would have turned out to vote in presidential elections, and that about 24 percent would have participated in Senate elections during nonpresidential election years.” With an estimated 7 out of 10 felons and ex-felons preferring democratic candidates it is expected that the minority supporting Republican candidates would turn up to vote at much higher rates providing a small advantage in every presidential and senatorial election from 1972 to 2000 (Manza and Uggen, 2004).

In the article “Does Incarceration Reduce Voting? Evidence about the Political Consequences of Spending Time in Prison,” primary authors Alan S. Gerber and Gregory A. Huber (2017) discuss how becoming involved in the criminal justice system “decreases political participation by depleting citizens’ resources, making them distrust government, and reducing commitments to civic norms.” The research that they conducted provided logical reasoning to believe that becoming convicted of a crime and/or imprisoned does not cause a large reduction in voter turnout. Even finding data that models “spending time in prison does not appear to reduce voting” (Gerber and Huber, 2017). This means that the researchers expect individuals incarcerated of crimes to vote at similar amounts as the general public. This is further agreed upon by Thomas J. Miles (2004) whose research discovered that ex-felons vote at similar levels to their demographic that has not been convicted of a crime. This shows that regardless of whether or not individuals have been convicted of a felony as they will turn out to participate in politics at similar amounts.

### The Science: An Abstract Applicable Theory & Related Hypothesis

**Theory:** The more people that are allowed to participate in politics results in more people being involved in the political process.

*Independent Variable:* Amount of people allowed to participate in politics

*Dependent Variable:* Amount of people that vote in elections

**Hypothesis:** An increase in legislation granting nonviolent offenders increased voting rights could increase voter turnout rates on the state level.

*Independent Variable:* Percentage of the state of felony offenders which are not able to vote.

*Dependent Variable:* Whether the numbers of state felony offenders would be decisive to an election, if they all voted one way.

Data:

*Independent Variable:* Data on the amount of disenfranchised felons was found using data on the 2016 general election online at the [electproject.org](http://electproject.org). Each state is listed with the amount of individuals ineligible per state because they are imprisoned, on parole, or under probationary status which is added together to determine the total amount disenfranchised for each state.

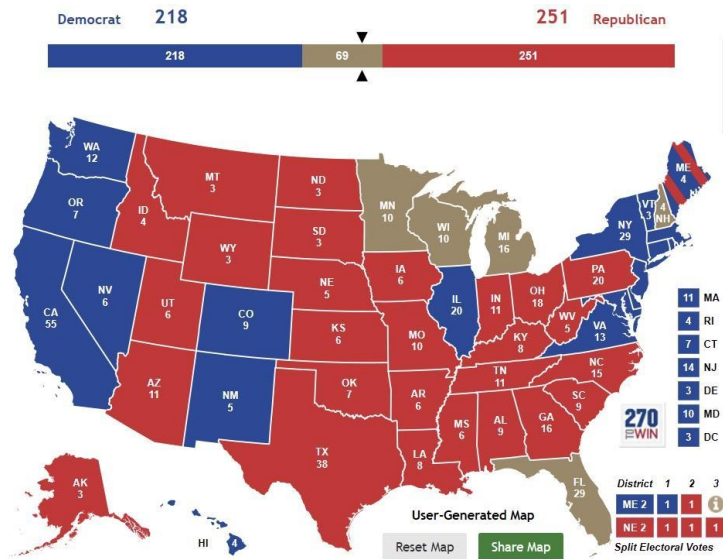
*Dependent Variable:* The percentage of voters that could have voted if all individuals convicted of a crime received suffrage was found for a state-by-state basis by finding the amount disenfranchised divided by the amount disenfranchised added to the voting eligible population to find the potential increase that a state could have received if all convicted offenders participated in the election. These percentages were then compared to the margins of victory for both Clinton and Trump to determine swing states that if felons were allowed to vote could have altered the results of the 2016 General Election with data from [politico.com](http://politico.com).

Statistics: I added the amount of disenfranchised individuals because of imprisonment, probationary status, and parole to find the total disenfranchised for every state and then dividing by the voting eligible population added to the disenfranchised total to determine the percent of voters gained that would occur if all convicted criminals were allowed to vote. I then used these percentages to determine the margin of victory for either Trump or Clinton to then determine whether the election could have been altered if criminals voted.

Results: On a national scale, granting every disenfranchised violent and nonviolent offender would result in an average increase to statehood voter eligibility of 1.27% with the percent of voters increasing by at least .30% for every state except Maine and Vermont who already allow all convicted criminals the opportunity to vote.

In the States of Florida, Michigan, Minnesota, New Hampshire, and Wisconsin the percentage of felons that had the possibility to vote is greater than the margin of victory for Clinton or Trump during the 2016 election in these states. This means that the new voting eligible population created by felons being allowed to vote could have changed the outcome of the election (modeled by the map below).





Analysis: If Georgia passed legislation providing voting rights to all individuals currently ineligible due to crimes, it would be expected that voting participation would not increase more than a maximum of 4.23 percentage points. On a national scale, these percentages would have been enough to potentially alter the results of the 2016 General Election by affecting the states of Florida, Michigan, Minnesota, New Hampshire, and Wisconsin, which would have been altered if all of the ex-felons voted one way.

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## **Section I: Ex-Felony Offender Voting Rights & Conservative Vote Percentage**

By: Andrew Valbuena, Student of Political Science, Lagrange College

**Summary Findings:** There is a relationship that conservative states make it more difficult for ex-felon offenders the right to vote.

**The Issue:** What states are more likely to grant felony offenders the right to vote, and whether ideology plays a role in this.

**The Subject Literature:** Social Justice and Voting Rights in the South by Gerald R. Webster (2007) states, “As of 2002, in ten states convicted felons could lose their right to vote forever (Alabama, Florida, Kentucky, Mississippi, and Virginia were among them)”. Many of the countries who have stricter voting rights for felons are located in the South. This is also where there are many red states. In Florida it was recently revised in the rules for ex-felon voting rights by the Florida Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights “Non-violent offenders who have completed all terms of their sentence will have an executive order granting the restoration of their civil rights signed by the Clemency Board without a hearing” (2008). This is the new rules for voting in Florida; before this Florida was one of the states that banned felons’ voting rights for life.

Richard L. Lippke states, “The contrast between typical criminal offenders and those who commit acts of nonviolent civil disobedience might be brought in to bolster this argument.” (2001) Lippke understands that not all felon offenders are the same and that they are a diverse group. One felon may be a lifelong criminal though another may be a first-time nonviolent offender.

**The Science: An Abstract Applicable Theory, And A Pair Of Specific Testable Hypotheses**

**Theory:** Ideologies of states determine the support for rehabilitation of inmates and integration of inmates into society.

Independent Variable: Ideology of the State

Dependent Variable: Support for Prisoner rehabilitation and integration into society

Hypothesis: Conservative states are more likely to grant nonviolent felony offenders the right to vote.

Independent Variable: Percentage of States residents who consider themselves conservative.

Dependent Variable: Level of support of nonviolent felony offenders the right to vote.

### **Data:**

**Independent Variable:** The percentages are gathered from Gallup polling (2018) and voting data is from the National Conference of State Legislatures (2018). The first group of 34 states is the percentage of state residents that consider themselves conservative from states that prevent voting until after probation/parole or a post waiting period is completed. The second group of 16 is percentage of conservative residents in states that allow voting in prison or after the sentence is completed.

**Dependent Variable:** The support for states to grant nonviolent felony offenders the right to vote. The first group is whether the state allows nonviolent felony offenders the right to vote in

prison or right after their sentence is complete. The second group is whether the state allows nonviolent offenders the right to vote after probation/parole or post sentencing waiting period. **Results:** The T-test used to compare these variables showed that there was a strong relationship between conservative states and not granting the right to vote to nonviolent felony offenders. Among states that restrict the votes of ex-felons, their average percentage of self-identified conservatives is 37%, while the percentage of a state that loosens regulations on ex-felon offender votes is 32%. The t-statistic (3.07) is statistically significant at the 99 percent range (<.001)

**Analysis:** Conservative states are less likely to grant nonviolent felony offenders the right to vote. If Georgia was to pass legislation granting nonviolent felony offenders the right to vote it would be different than what most other conservative states are generally doing.

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## Section J: Ex-Felony Offender Voting Rights & Republican Votes in the 2016 Election

By: Porter Law, Political Science Major, LaGrange College

Summary Finding: There is a relationship between states' political support affecting a state of allowing nonviolent felony offenders to vote. States that gave more votes for Donald Trump in 2016 were more likely on average to restrict the voting rights of ex-felons.

The Issue: There is a concern about a connection between a state's political support affecting the state's government supporting for allowing nonviolent felony offenders to vote.

The Subject Literature: In his book *Locked Out: Felon Disenfranchisement and American Democracy*, Jeff Manza (2006: 8) writes "The disenfranchisement of hundreds of thousands of former offenders in the state of Florida-individuals who have completed their entire sentence-was a critical factor enabling George W. Bush to carry the state and win the 2000 presidential election." He adds "The Supreme Court has generally sided with such views in this area. Its supporters point to the diversity of state felon disenfranchisement laws, asserting that each state adopts laws asserting that each state adopts law consistent with the political ideology of its citizens. For example, in a U.S. Senate debate a few years ago, Jeff Sessions (R-AL) declared: 'I think this Congress, with this little debate we are having on this bill, ought not to step in and, with a big sledge hammer, smash something we have had from the beginnings of this country's foundation-a set of election laws in every state in America... To just up and do that is disrespectful to them.'"

In *Felon Disenfranchisement: The Voting Rights Act Fifty Years Later*, (Uggen et al., 2003) found that many Southern states (which have large African-American populations) have the most extensive set of voting restrictions. Many, like Florida, have lifetime bans for ex-offenders. Since African Americans are overrepresented in the U.S. jails, prisons, and probation/ parole cases, they are also overrepresented in the disenfranchised population.

### The Science: An Abstract Applicable Theory, And A Pair Of Specific Testable Hypotheses

Theory: Does a state's political support affect the number of nonviolent felonies.

*Independent Variable:* Political party support by state residents

*Dependent Variable:* Views on ex-criminals

Hypothesis A: Does the state's political support affect nonviolent felony offenders being allowed to vote in a state.

*Independent Variable:* **Vote percentage for Trump in 2016.**

*Dependent Variable:* A former felony offender having the right to vote.

Data:

*Independent Variable:* Data on voting rights for felony offenders comes from the National Conference of State Legislatures (2018). There are 22 states which allow felony offenders the right to vote after parole and/or probation, and 12 states which do not allow felony offenders the right to vote after prison, parole and probation and an additional waiting period, without special permission after successful reapplication. Thirty four states have some restrictions on ex-felons while 16 states along with DC reestablish voting rights during or after prison, often while the ex-felon is on parole or probation.

*Dependent Variable:* The voting percentage of Donald Trump’s support in every state in the 2016 election.

Statistics:

I compare how the 34 states that are friendly to nonviolent felony offender having the chance to vote to the percentage points of Donald Trump’s voting result in every state in the 2016 presidential election. I compared it by putting the numbers into a t-test and see if the comparison is significant or not.

Data Summary			
	A	B	Total
n	34	17	51
$\sum X$	1755.40000	705.900000	2461.3
$\sum X^2$	93654.5600	32233.6299	125888.19
SS	3024.2906	2922.1706	7103.9216
mean	51.6294	41.5235	48.2608

Results				
Mean <sub>a</sub> —Mean <sub>b</sub>	t	df	P	
10.1059	+3.09	49		one-tailed 0.001648
				two-tailed 0.003296

For independent samples, these results pertain to the "usual" t-test, which assumes that the two samples have equal variances.

F-Test for the Significance of the Difference between the Variances of the Two Samples			
df <sub>1</sub>	df <sub>2</sub>	F	P
16	33	1.93	0.054143

Results:

The results are statistically significant in comparing the states that allow former felony offenders their voting rights back sooner to a state’s political support. Showing how the two averages are significantly different and having t= +3.09. The f

Analysis:

We are 95% confident that the state’s political support does affect the support of nonviolent felony offenders having the right to vote. The more Trump votes in a state, the more likely it is among the states to require ex-felons to go through parole, probation, or some other delay before receiving those voting rights back.

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## **Section K: Ex-Felony Offender Voting Rights & Group Support (Age, Gender, Ethnicity & Political Party)**

By Elijah Robertson, Sociology Major, LaGrange College

**Summary Finding:** The majority of the public approves of the right to restore ex-convicts voting rights. Some groups give more support to ex-felons winning their voting rights back. Political party and ethnicity matter, whereas age and gender play less of a role in support for reestablishing voting rights for ex-felons, according to a Florida poll.

**The Issue:** Would the public deny ex-convicts voting rights restored due to them being labeled criminals in society. And which groups of people would be more likely to support this idea?

**The Subject Literature:** In the book *Journal of Criminal Justice*, Kristy Holtfreter, Shanna Van Slyke, Jason Bratton, and Marc Gertz (2008) writes “Past research suggested that citizens are more likely to support punitive sanctions for street offenders than white-collar offenders. Recent corporate scandals have increased public awareness of white-collar crime, but whether public attitudes have been altered remains to be determined.” (Holtfreter et.al., 2008). Moreover, Matthew Sheffield (2019) finds “A significant majority of Americans are opposed to the idea of prisoners being able to vote in national elections, according to a new poll.”

In a Hill-HarrisX survey released Thursday, “69 percent of registered voters said incarcerated felons should not be allowed to retain their voting rights. Thirty-one percent favored the idea.” Also mentioning 2020 candidate Bernie Sanders, “Sanders has stood stand by his position, calling felon disenfranchisement a legacy of racism and a means for Republicans to deny voting rights to Americans who are not likely to vote for them.” (Shaeffield 2019). Carolyn Côté-Lussier (2016) argues that harsh perception of criminals’ makes ex-convicts feel as if they need to fight and earn a chance to sit at the table in terms of economic and education attainment. Also arguing that society perceives criminals as untrustworthy thus giving convicts and ex-cons less compassion (Côté-Lussier 2016).

### **The Science: A Few Abstract Applicable Theories, And Specific Corresponding Testable Hypotheses**

**Theory 1:** Certain groups are more likely to support the rights of ex-felons than others.

Gender is a factor that is likely to affect people's views of criminals.

*Independent Variables (1):* Political and social group classification

*Dependent Variables (1):* Views on ex-felons

**Hypothesis 1:** In a poll of Floridians, men are less sympathetic and less likely to support granting ex-criminals the right to vote

*Independent Variable (1):* Gender

*Dependent Variable (1):* Support for reestablishing voting rights of ex-felons.

**Hypothesis 2:** Political parties may be a factor in the public’s view on criminals. Republicans are harsher on the views of criminals than Democrats.

*Independent Variable (2):* Political Party Identification (Democrats, Independent and Republicans)



*Dependent Variable (2): Support for reestablishing voting rights of ex-felons.*

**Hypothesis 3:** Race and Ethnicity may affect the people’s view in criminals. Minorities are more likely to be sympathetic in supporting grants for ex-criminals voting rights.

*Independent Variable (3): A person’s race or ethnicity*

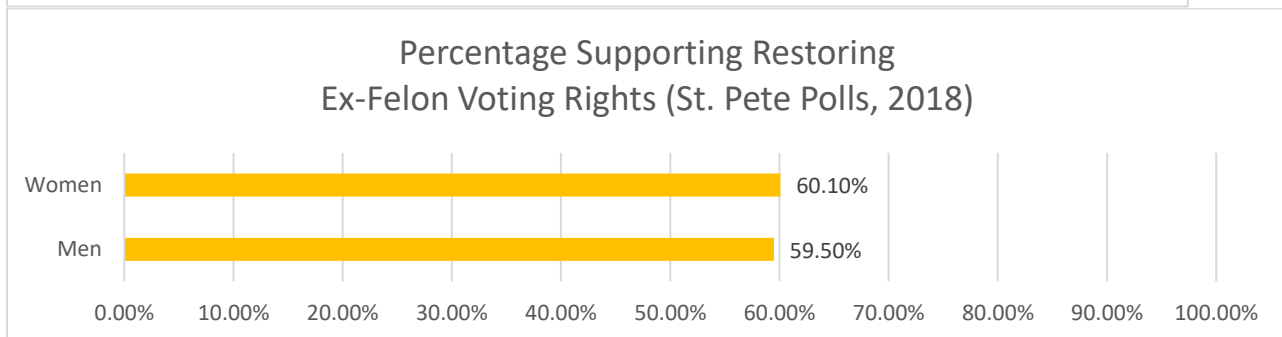
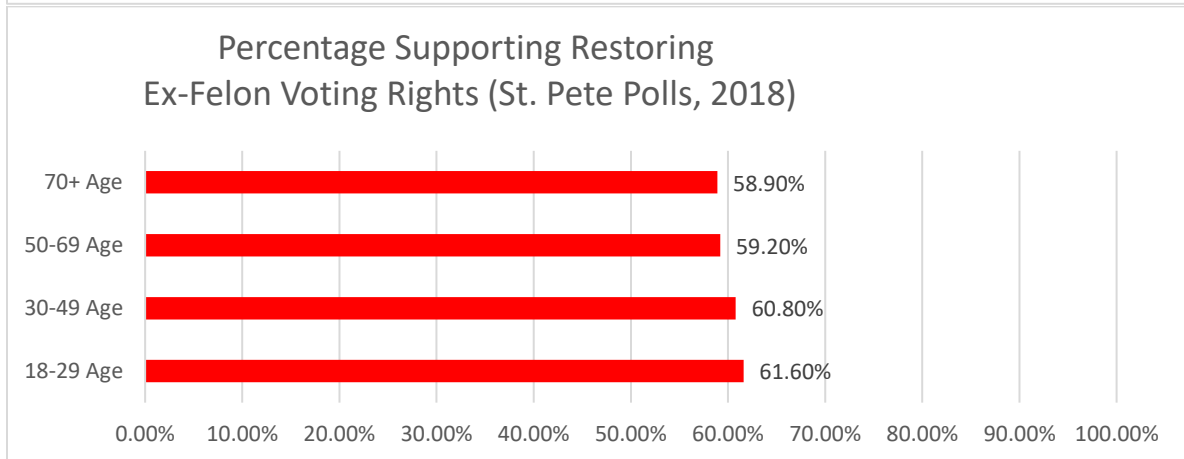
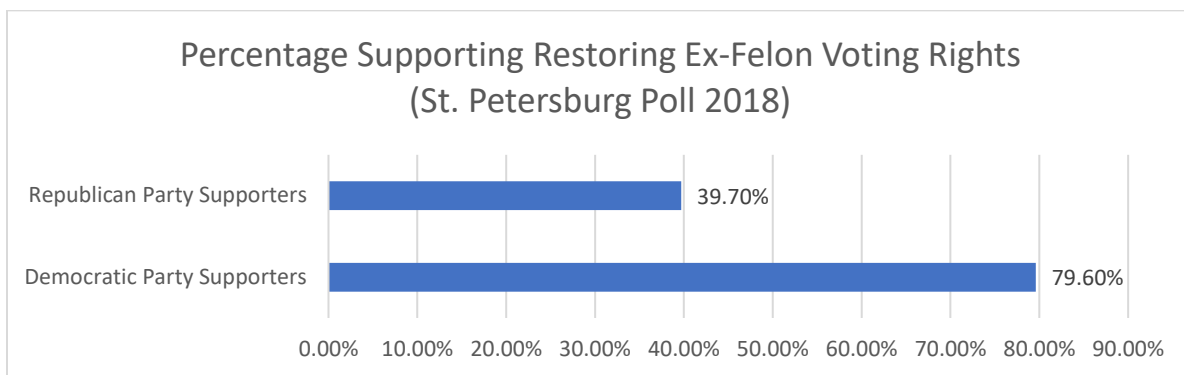
*Dependent Variable (3): Support for reestablishing voting rights of ex-felons.*

**Hypothesis 4:** Age is a factor that is likely to affect public’s views of criminals. The young are more likely to support the reestablishment of criminal voting rights than the older.

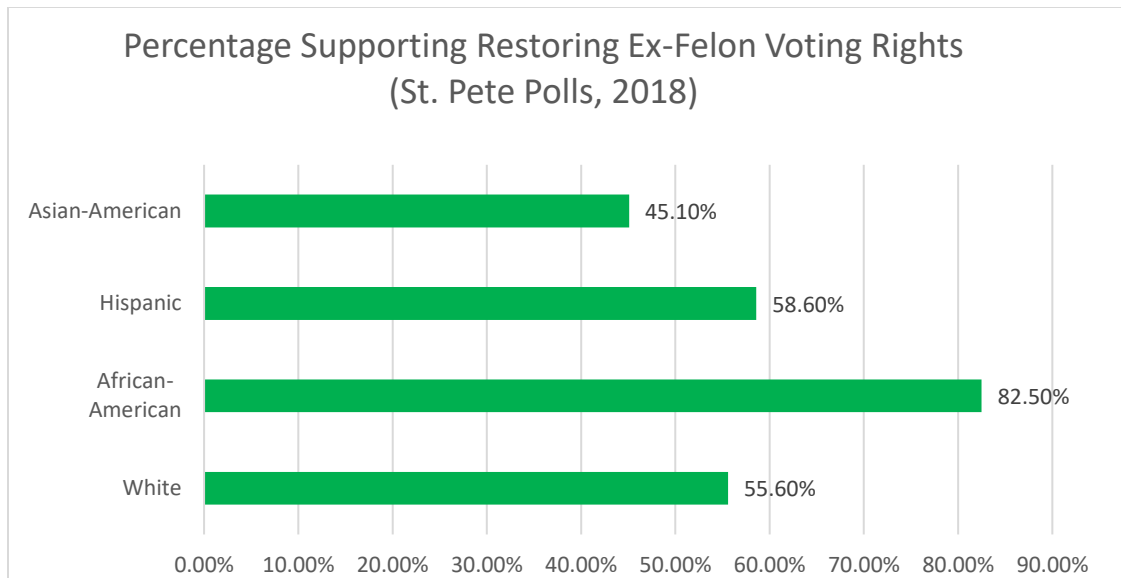
*Independent Variable (4): Age groups 18 to 29, 30 to 49, 50 to 69, 70+*

*Dependent Variable (4): Support for reestablishing voting rights of ex-felons.*

Data: The data can be found from the St. Pete Polls (2018) in the following graphs.







**Results:** From the data you can see that Democrats support the reestablishment of criminal voting rights along with independent voters. In the race breakdown blacks were highly supportive with over 80% voting for reestablishment along with whites and Hispanics voting over 50% for reestablishment. Asia Americans were harsher than any other race voting less than 50% for it. Males and females were equally supportive of the Florida ballot initiative restoring voting rights for ex-felons. This referendum also showed little variation among respondents by age, though young people were slightly more like to favor reenfranchising the votes of ex-felons.

**Analysis:** The people of Florida support the restoration of ex-felon voting rights in the poll, and at the ballot box, as the referendum was approved by a solid majority.

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## Section L: Ex-Felony Offender Voting Rights & Religion

By Melanie Chambers and Dr. John A. Tures

Summary: There is a relationship between states which have a higher level of residents calling themselves “highly religious” and that state’s denial of voting rights to ex-felons in prison or upon release, though some allow this to be restored after parole, probation, and possibly other states.

Issue: Does a state’s level of religiosity have an impact upon how a state views criminals? More specifically, do states with a higher level of believers offer a more punitive or redemptive view toward ex-felons and restoring their voting rights.

### Scientific Study of the Theory and Hypothesis

Theory: Religious affiliation of states determines attitudes toward criminals

IV- How religious the members of the state are

DV- How states view criminals

Hypothesis: States with higher religious affiliation will have higher disenfranchisement.

IV- Percentage of a state’s citizens describing themselves as “religious” in a survey

DV- Whether a state grants voting rights to ex-felons or not

Data: Information on the granting of ex-felon voting rights comes from the National Conference on State Legislatures (NCSL 2018). Data on religious beliefs per state comes from the Pew Research Forum (Lipka and Wormald 2016).

Results: Our statistics show that the average percentage of respondents in states who say “religion is very important in their lives” is 57.47% in the 34 states that restrict the voting rights of ex-felons. For the 16 states plus DC who provide more voting rights to ex-felons, the average percentage of people considering themselves to be religious is just under 50%. The statistical relationship between religion and the granting of voting rights is quite strong; there is a 99% chance that the evidence of significance is unrelated to chance ( $t = 2.84$ ).

	A	B	Total
n	34	17	51
$\Sigma X$	19.54	8.34	27.88
$\Sigma X^2$	11.598800	4.208	15.806800
SS	0.369	0.1165	0.5657
mean	0.5747	0.4906	0.5467

### Results

Mean <sub>a</sub> - Mean <sub>b</sub>	t	df	P	one-tailed	0.003276
0.0841	+2.84	49		two-tailed	0.006552

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