

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/blog/alabama-restores-voting-rights-for-thousands-with-felony-convictions>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

In criminal justice reform, it's been a good couple of months for the South.

[Updated 11/30/17]

As noted in a *New York Times* article, Louisiana Governor John Bell Edwards has struck a deal to [reduce Louisiana's prison](#) population and in Georgia, the *Times* calls Republican governor Nathan Deal, a former prosecutor, a national leader in the prison reform movement.

Now, Alabama is poised to begin addressing voter disenfranchisement beginning with restoring voting rights to people formerly convicted of certain types of felonies. Addressing voter disenfranchisement has long been a component of the criminal justice reform process that many view as a necessary step towards changing the way America views and treats people who were formerly incarcerated.

Since the Supreme Court's 2013 repeal of Section IV of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, reformers have worried that the special scrutiny and oversight that once protected classes of voters—many of them poor people of color—had given way to discriminatory practices that constrained the democratic process, keeping many communities locked out of it. That has been especially true for the millions of Americans who are formerly incarcerated.

In May, a bill, called the Definition of Moral Turpitude Act, passed through both houses of Alabama's legislature.

Governor Kay Ivey's office reported shortly thereafter that the Governor had signed the act into law, extending the right to vote to 'thousands' of people with felony charges.

As *The Birmingham News* [originally reported](#):

The law is expected to have wide-reaching impacts across Alabama, including by allowing those who are currently incarcerated to vote via absentee ballot.

Advocates are hopeful that Alabama may embrace an aspect of criminal justice reform that they have long called for:

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