

Vocal NY

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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Public Facing Advocacy Writing

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VOCAL-NY Responds to NYS Assembly Passing Legislation to Restore Voting Rights to People on Parole

A.4448/S.830A Codifies the Restoration of Voting Rights For All Formerly Incarcerated People Chipping Away at Jim Crow-Era Voter Bans

ALBANY, N.Y. Today, VOCAL-NY released the following statement applauding the passage of A.4448/S.830 by the Assembly following passage in the Senate earlier this year. This legislation will codify the restoration of voting rights to those on parole and end a Jim-Crow era law that disproportionately disenfranchised Black and brown New Yorkers. Importantly the passage of this law still leaves people incarcerated in State prisons unable to vote, which we are working to address through a [constitutional amendment](#). **The following statement is attributable to Marilyn Reyes, a leader and Board Member of VOCAL-NY:**

Its so great that this bill that we fought for for so long has passed. This means that the people in my community can now vote and be heard in the community instead of being denied because they were on parole. When I came home from prison I was told I would never be able to vote again. That was a lie, but I didnt know. I eventually was able to register after my parole ended, but I couldnt vote for several years. Now that wont happen to anyone again and everyone with a record or who is on parole can vote right away. Thats great.

BACKGROUND:

New York States felony disenfranchisement voter bans date back to the 1860s. They were passed to prevent Black people from voting and have the same impact today. While Governor Cuomos executive order to restore voting rights through pardons was helpful, it also created unnecessary confusion and government inefficiencies. Without formal legislation theres confusion on who can vote, and ultimately the decision is discretionary, leaving room for reversals of this effort. Even today, [nearly 75% of New Yorkers](#) who are home from prison and cannot vote unless they get a conditional pardon are Black and brown.

VOCAL-NY leaders and community partners have been working on this effort for many years. Ahead of the 2016 election, local leaders canvassed and gathered formerly incarcerated New Yorkers to advocate for their right to vote. Watch Vices [Barred from the Ballot Box: Disenfranchised in New York](#) to hear from Steven Johnson, a formerly incarcerated New Yorker with a lifetime parole who would have their rights restored if this law were signed.

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