Most inmates in California jails are eligible to vote. But former inmate Christopher Jackson says few of them actually know that. Fewer still have any idea how to cast their ballots from behind bars.

During the months Jackson spent in custody at San Diego Central Jail and George Bailey Detention Facility, he registered about 200 of his fellow inmates to vote ahead of the 2018 municipal elections.

Nearly all, he said, were surprised to learn that Californians in pretrial incarceration can legally vote, or that their votes for city council members or judges could affect their own futures.

“We’re all here in this situation, in custody, but that doesn’t mean that we don’t have a say in this district,” said Jackson, who has since been released. “There are a lot of people who may not be found guilty, and even those that have to take some time for what they did, their vote should still count.”

Jackson’s work as an inside voting organizer was funded by [Pillars of the Community](https://www.potcsd.org/), a faith-based criminal justice advocacy group led by Black Muslims in southeast San Diego. Leaders of the group say they want to see an America without prisons.