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# Voter Suppression in 2020: Florida's Felon Disenfranchisement Policies

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# What is felon disenfranchisement?

“the practice of barring individuals who have been convicted of felony crimes from voting in political elections” - Oxford Bibliographies

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# Background

History of Felon Disenfranchisement in Florida

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- Felon disenfranchisement is one of the most common forms of voter suppression today
  - Varies greatly from state to state
  - In Florida, **23 percent** of the African-American community is ineligible to vote due to strict legislation

## ● Timeline of Florida's Policies

○ **2018:** Floridian voters approved Amendment 4, a ballot initiative to re-enfranchising people who have completed their felony sentence

○ **2019:** Florida Governor Ron DeSantis rules to include unpaid fines and fees in definition of felony sentence-- a modern poll tax

○ **2020:** We propose a ballot initiative that explicitly excludes fines and fees from the definition of a felony sentence

**Table 1.** Summary of Felony Disenfranchisement Laws.

No restriction	Prison	Prison and parole	Prison, parole, and probation	Prison, parole, and post-sentence— Some or all
Maine	Hawaii	California	Alaska	Alabama
Vermont	Illinois	Colorado	Arkansas	Arizona
	Indiana	Connecticut	Georgia	Delaware
	Massachusetts	New York	Idaho	Florida ←
	Michigan		Kansas	Iowa
	Montana		Louisiana	Kentucky
	New Hampshire		Maryland	Mississippi
	North Dakota		Minnesota	Nebraska
	Ohio		Missouri	Nevada
	Oregon		New Jersey	Tennessee
	Pennsylvania		New Mexico	Virginia
	Rhode Island		North Carolina	Wyoming
	Utah		Oklahoma	
			South Carolina	
			South Dakota	
			Texas	
			Washington	
			West Virginia	
			Wisconsin	

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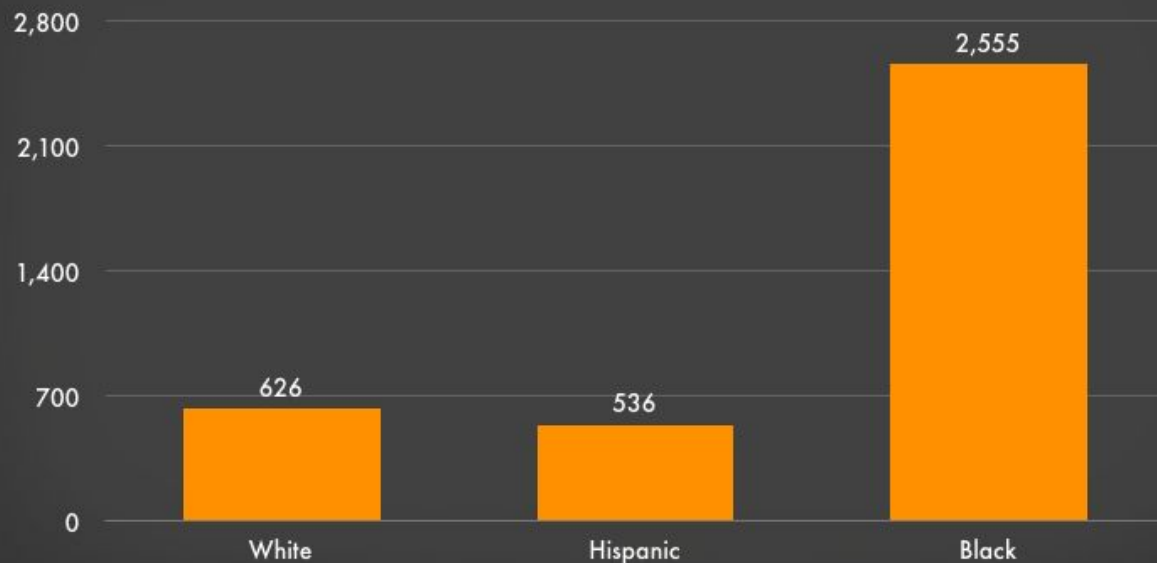


**1.6 million**

convicted felons in Florida are  
ineligible to vote as of 2019

## FLORIDA INCARCERATION RATES BY RACE/ETHNICITY, 2010

(Number of people incarcerated per 100,000 people in that racial/ethnic group)





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## Options

## ● Three Options

### ○ Law

- Alter the definition of a complete sentence to exclude payment of fees and fines

### Constitutional Amendment

- Another method of clarifying the definition of a complete sentence
- once they are released from prison

### Ballot Initiative

- Proposed by citizens
- Voted on via a ballot
- Amendment 4 (2018)

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## Policy Recommendation

## ● Ballot Initiative

- This form of policy will allow for:
  - Clarification of a complete sentence
  - Enforcement of re-enfranchisement upon release from prison

These revisions will specify that completion of a prison sentence occurs as soon as the prisoner is released.

## ● Ballot Initiative

### ○ Pros

- Has been done before
- Initiated by the people not the legislature
- Most realistic given FL's history of power control
- Creates long lasting change

### Cons

- Expensive: \$7 million minimum
- Requires at least 766,200 signatures

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## Acknowledgements and References

## ● Acknowledgments

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Thank you!