Explaining voter rights

Writing information to explain rights to voters with a felony conviction or other interaction with the criminal justice system

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July 2020
Overview

This presentations shows ways to improve the content of your website for voters in the criminal justice system on three pages of your website:

• voter eligibility
• restoration of rights
• frequently asked questions

These recommendations are based on a review of existing state elections websites. The layout and content can be adapted to your website design. They do not depend on specific laws or eligibility rules.
1: Voter Eligibility Information

Integrating restoration of rights information into the page or section with general information about voter eligibility.
Registering to vote

To be eligible to vote you must:

- Be a Citizen of the United States
- Be a legal resident of the state of Hamilton
- Be at least 18 years of age
- Not be a person serving a term of confinement in any state or federal correctional institution.
- Not be adjudicated incapacitated by a court of law.
Registering to Vote

Am I eligible to vote?

- Are you a United States citizen
- Do you live in the State of Hamilton?
- Are you at least 18 years old?
- If you have been convicted of a felony, are your voting rights restored?

To learn about voting after being convicted of a crime, please visit the information guide for voters with felony convictions.

If you have answered yes to all these questions, you can vote! Follow the steps to register below.
Recommendations for presenting eligibility

1. Make the information clearer by listing the voter qualifications in a question format. This also eliminates the need to have negative requirements.

2. Include a clear, descriptive link to a page for voters with a criminal history.

3. Include a link for restoration of rights information. Putting this in the navigation menu with other special audiences will ensure that it is easy to find.

The text for the link to the page for rights information is adapted from Pennsylvania and North Carolina’s sites.
Create a separate page where you have room to provide complete explanations and links as needed.
Restoration of Voting Rights

In General

Under Assembly Bill 1234 any Hamilton resident who is convicted of a felony is immediately restored the right to vote upon the individual’s release from prison. There is no waiting period or action required by the individual. The restoration of voting rights is automatic and immediate upon the individual’s release from prison, regardless of the category of felony committed.

Individuals who have had their voting rights restored must meet all the other eligibility requirements in order to register to vote. In order to be eligible to register to vote in Hamilton, an individual must:

Be a U.S. citizen;
Be at least 18 years old by the date of the next election (or at least 17 years old if preregistering to vote);
Have continuously resided in Hamilton and the county for at least 30 days before the next election; and
Any individual who has been convicted of a felony and is currently serving a term of imprisonment cannot register to vote or otherwise participate in the voting process while the individual is in prison.
Can I register to vote?

You can register to vote if you have been convicted of a felony and completed your sentence. This includes completing probation and parole.

You have not lost your rights and can vote if you are:
- in jail and awaiting trial
- in jail for a misdemeanor.

How do I register to vote?

If you were registered to vote before your conviction, your registration was canceled at the time of your conviction. You will need to reregister in order to vote. If you are eligible, you can register online.

What address should I use when registering to vote?

If you have completed your sentence: use the address that you are currently living.

If you are in jail or registering from prison: use your most recent address from before your confinement.

How will I vote?

If you are currently in jail, you will vote by absentee ballot.

If you are not in jail or prison, you will vote at your polling place.

- Find your polling place
- Learn about absentee voting
- Contact your county election office
Recommendations for presenting details

1. Use a page title that the audience can identify with
2. Break up the text with questions on the left and answers on the right to make the page easier to scan.
3. Include links to other relevant pages.
4. Many voters may be currently serving in jails and still be eligible to vote. Including information about addresses prevents confusion and ensures that eligible voters can register accurately.
5. Include information about absentee voting for people registering and voting from jail.

The text for the link to the page for rights information is adapted from Pennsylvania and North Carolina’s sites.
3: Questions and Answers

Including information for voters involved with the justice system in any general Q&A page provides another entry point to detailed information.
Frequently Asked Questions: Voter Registration

- **What Do I need to know?**
- **What are the Qualifications?**
- **Can a Person Convicted of a Felon Register to vote?**
- **Can I Register If I don’t have a fixed Address?**
- **When Can I register to vote?**
- • **When can I change my political party?**
- • **What are the deadlines?**
- • **What are my responsibilities?**
- • **How can I cancel my voter Registration?**

**Can A Person Convicted of a Felon Register to Vote?**

- If convicted of a felony offense in Hamilton or any other state, your voting rights are restored upon completion of all terms of a sentence including parole or probation pursuant to section 4., Art. VI of the Hamilton Constitution.

- To determine if you have completed all the terms of your sentence including parole or probation as to one or more felony conviction(s), contact one or more of the following offices as may be applicable: Hamilton Department of Corrections, and/or the clerk of the court in the jurisdiction(s) in which you were convicted whether that be a circuit court in Hamilton, a court in another state, or a federal court.

**Can I Register If I don’t have a fixed Address?**

- Yes. If you don’t have a fixed residence or are homeless and otherwise qualified to vote in Delaware, you may register by completing the proper registration form. If registering in-person you must provide two pieces of identification containing your name.
Frequently Asked Questions: Voter Registration

▶ What Do I need to know?

▶ What are the Qualifications?

▼ Can I Register to Vote if I Have Been Convicted of a Felony?

- If you have been convicted of a felony in Hamilton or any other state, you can register to vote once you have completed all terms of your sentence including probation and parole. To learn more about your voting rights, please visit the Information guide for voters with felony convictions.

- If you are unsure whether you have completed all terms of your sentence please contact your probation officer or Hamilton Department of Corrections.

▼ Can I Register If I don’t have a fixed Address?

▶ When Can I register to vote?

▶ When can I change my political party?
Recommendations for FAQs

1. If you have an FAQ page, use it to provide minimal answers and link to detailed information.

2. Make your FAQ page easier to read by hiding text in sections that expand when readers click on them.

3. Always direct the user to where they can learn more.

4. Remind formerly incarcerated citizens that they can also contact the Department of Corrections or their probation officer for more information about their status.
Thank you

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