

S.524 An Act Relative to Voting Rights Restoration

In **2000**, Massachusetts voters decisively approved **Question 2** by approximately **60%** (a clear majority after public debate). This constitutional amendment prohibits people incarcerated in a correctional facility due to a felony conviction from voting in elections for governor, lieutenant governor, state senators, representatives, and other key offices. State laws later extended this to federal and local elections as well.

This voter-approved rule strikes the right balance: it imposes a fair, temporary penalty for serious crimes that violate society's trust, while automatically restoring voting rights upon release—no extra steps required. It respects victims, upholds accountability, and supports rehabilitation by encouraging a clean break from prison.

Passing S.524 would undermine these principles and create serious concerns, including:

- **Disrespecting voters' direct decision** — The 2000 ballot measure was a democratic choice after open discussion; overriding it through legislation bypasses the people's voice.
- **Granting unfair influence** — Incarcerated felons could vote on policies directly affecting them, such as sentence lengths, prison conditions, parole rules, or law enforcement funding—prioritizing personal benefit over broader public safety and community interests.
- **Weakening criminal responsibility** — Serious crimes already break societal trust; removing this civic penalty during incarceration diminishes consequences and could erode respect for the law.
- **Risking public trust in elections** — Allowing votes from those serving time for violent or grave offenses might lead citizens to question the fairness and integrity of our democratic process.