

Inmate Electoral Privileges

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Forfeiture of Electoral Privileges

In Connecticut, a person forfeits his or her right to be an elector, and all accompanying electoral privileges (i.e., the right to vote, run for public office, and hold an office), upon conviction of a felony and commitment to any state or federal prison ([CGS § 9-46](#)). An individual convicted of a misdemeanor, however, does not lose his or her electoral privileges.

(Under [CGS § 9-46a](#), a person imprisoned for a felony regains the right to vote and accompanying electoral privileges after paying all fines and completing any required prison and parole time – see below.)

Voting in Detention

By law, any person in state custody being held at a community correctional center or a correctional institution, whose voting rights have not been denied, is deemed to be absent from his or her town or city of residency for purposes of voting ([CGS § 9-14a](#)).

In 2018, OLR asked the Department of Correction (DOC) how a pre-trial (unsentenced) inmate may vote. According to DOC, these inmates may send a written request for an absentee ballot, and complete and return it by mail. The same process would apply for any inmate convicted of a misdemeanor.

Removal Pursuant to a Felony Conviction

Each month, the DOC commissioner must send the secretary of the state (SOTS) a list of individuals who were convicted of a felony and committed to state custody during the preceding month. The list includes the individuals' names, addresses, birth dates, conviction dates, and crimes committed. The secretary must send the list to the registrars in all the towns where (1) the individuals lived at the time of their conviction and (2) she believes they may be registered to vote.

Pursuant to the National Voter Registration Act, SOTS also receives from the U.S. attorney the names of those convicted of felonies in federal courts and forwards that information to the appropriate registrars ([52 U.S.C. § 20507\(g\)](#)). After sending a written notice by certified mail to an individual's last known address, the registrars must remove the name from the registry list ([CGS § 9-45](#)). As a result, town registrars should have an up-to-date list by which they can verify one's eligibility as a registered elector.

Restoring Electoral Privileges

By law, individuals with felony convictions may not become electors until discharged from confinement and parole, and those convicted of election-related felonies may not become electors until any probation ends. The DOC commissioner must (1) give the person upon release a document certifying his or her release from confinement and discharge from parole, if applicable, and (2) transmit on a monthly basis to SOTS a list of all individuals with felony convictions who are released from confinement and discharged from parole, if applicable ([CGS § 9-46a](#)).

The law requires electoral privileges to be automatically restored if, at the time of such felony conviction, the person was (1) an elector and (2) residing in the same municipality as he or she is upon release from confinement and discharge from parole. If he or she was not an elector at the time of conviction, or was an elector but was living in a different municipality, then by law the person must register to vote in order for electoral privileges to be granted or restored.

Recent Proposed Legislation

In recent years, several proposed bills have sought to restore the voting rights of individuals with felony convictions who are on parole (3,562 individuals as of May 1, 2019). Most recently, in 2019, [sHB 7160 \(as amended by House "A"\)](#) made several changes concerning the forfeiture and restoration of electoral privileges for such individuals, including eliminating a requirement that they forfeit electoral privileges if committed to DOC custody (or a state or county correction department outside Connecticut) for confinement in a community residence. It allowed them to regain their electoral privileges upon release from confinement in a correctional institution or facility. It also eliminated current law's requirements that such individuals, to have their privileges restored, also (1) be released from a community residence, (2) be discharged from parole, and (3) pay all felony conviction-related fines. The amended bill passed the House, but was tabled in the Senate.

What is Parole?

- A period of conditional supervised release following incarceration
- Inmates sentenced to more than two years in prison are generally eligible for parole after serving:
 - 50% of their sentence if convicted of non-violent crimes
 - 85% of their sentence if convicted of violent crimes
- Those convicted of certain crimes, like murder, are not eligible for parole ([CGS § 54-125a](#))
- The Board of Pardons and Paroles has independent decision-making authority to (1) grant or deny parole, (2) set conditions of parole, and (3) rescind or revoke parole ([CGS § 54-124a](#))

Learn
More

[Secretary of the State's website](#)

[DOC Fact Sheet on Voting Procedures for Eligible Inmates](#)

[NCSL website on felon voting rights](#)

