

Voting Rights After Felony Conviction

Changes to the Law on the Forfeiture of Voting Rights

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 confinement at a state or federal prison. A new 2021 law restored these privileges for existing felony convicts confined in an in- or out-of-state community residence (e.g., halfway house, group home, or mental health facility) and allows new felony convicts committed to community residences to retain these privileges ([PA 21-2, JSS](#), §§ 96-98). The act also restored these privileges for convicted felons who are on parole or special parole. (Under prior law, a person imprisoned for a felony regained the right to vote and accompanying electoral privileges after paying all fines and completing any required prison and parole time – see below.)

However, the new law specifies that if a person regains his or her electoral privileges after forfeiture, he or she must again forfeit them upon returning to confinement in a correctional institution or facility from:

1. parole or special parole;
2. release to (a) an educational program or work, (b) a community residence, (c) a zero-tolerance drug supervision program, (d) home confinement for certain motor vehicle and drug offenses, or (e) a community-based nursing home for palliative and end-of-life care; or
3. specified furloughs granted at the Department of Correction (DOC) commissioner's discretion (e.g., to permit attendance at a relative's funeral or to obtain medical services not otherwise available).

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, as amended by PA 21-32](#))

Voter Registry Removal

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 this 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 (CGS § 9-45, as amended by PA 21-2, JSS). 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\(g\)](#)).

Effective July 1, 2021, the DOC report (1) no longer must include a list of these people confined in a community residence and (2) must now include a list of people returned to confinement in a correctional institution or facility for violating the terms of their parole, special parole, release, or furlough, along with the date and nature of these violations. It similarly requires SOTS to notify registrars in towns where (1) people returned to confinement previously resided or (2) she believes they may be electors. By law, after sending a written notice by certified mail to the person's last known address, the registrars must remove his or her name from the registry list ([CGS § 9-45, as amended by PA 21-2, JSS](#)).

Restoration of Voting Rights

The new law allows certain convicted felons to regain their electoral privileges upon release from confinement in a correctional institution or facility. It eliminates prior law's requirements that these people also, as applicable, (1) be released from a community residence, (2) be discharged from parole, and (3) pay all felony conviction-related fines.) The new law also restores electoral privileges to those convicted felons who forfeited them and are confined in community residences. The DOC commissioner must, within available appropriations, inform people who are on parole, special parole, or in community residence confinement of their right to become electors and the process for restoring their privileges. By law, voting rights of those convicted of an election-related felony are not restored until they are discharged from any related parole or probation ([CGS § 9-46a\(b\), as amended by PA 21-2, JSS](#)).



The new law also made related changes to a report that the DOC commissioner must send to SOTS of all people who were released in the previous month and are eligible to become electors. As under existing law, the secretary must send this list to the registrars in the towns where (1) the people lived at the time of their conviction or (2) she believes they may be electors. In addition, electoral privileges must 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. 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 rights are not automatically restored and the person must register to vote (CGS § 9-46a, as amended by PA 21-2, JSS).

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