

INFORMATION SHEET FOR LB 158

Proposed legislative bill: LB 158 Eliminate two year waiting period and restore voting rights immediately upon completion of felony sentence, including parole or probation.

To read LB 158: https://nebraskalegislature.gov/bills/view_bill.php?DocumentID=43690. Check out the testimony in the Government Hearing held on Feb. 24, 2021.

History: Nebraska adopted lifetime disenfranchisement (deprived of the right to vote) in 1875 during the Reconstruction era after the Civil War. In 2005 the legislature established the current two year waiting period. In 2017 the legislature passed a bill to eliminate the waiting period, but it was vetoed by Gov. Pete Ricketts. A similar bill was introduced in 2018 and in 2020, but neither advanced from committee to be voted on by the legislature. LB 158 was introduced in January 2021 and could be considered by the legislature in the session starting January 5, 2022.

Why the Side with Love Social Justice Team supports LB 158:

The two year waiting period restricts a person's constitutional right with no meaningful policy justification and is taxation without representation. Punishing a person by restricting their constitutional right to vote for a period beyond their sentence is a holdover from the days of blocking people of color from voting and should be eliminated. In 2020, an estimated 25percent of the votes disenfranchised by this law in Nebraska were black, while black individuals make up only 5.2 percent of our state's population, according to Shayna Bartow in her testimony at the Government Hearing. When a person has completed the sentence imposed by the court for commission of a felony, restoring to that person the right to vote will encourage them to play a role in their community, to be engaged.

How YOU can learn more about LB 158 and related issues:

1. See the Side with Love Social Justice Team webpage on the First Unitarian Church of Omaha website.
2. See information at civicnebraska.org, a nonpartisan site aiming to build a more modern and robust democracy for all Nebraska. (<https://www.civicnebraska.org/>)

How YOU can support passage of LB 158:

1. Call or write a note or postcard or email to your state legislator. To find who your senator is now since redistricting, go to: https://nebraskalegislature.gov/senators/senator_find.php On the website, enter your address to see your senator with a link to his/her webpage below the photo.
Two important action steps you can take:
A) Contact Justin Wayne, bill sponsor, to thank him for his continued work in this area and encourage him to make this bill a priority.
B) Contact the other senators on the committee (Senators Brewer, Halloran, Lowe, and Sanders) who have not fully endorsed LB 158 and encourage them to support it. One more senator on the committee is needed to advance this bill for consideration by the full legislature. Contact Information for all Nebraska State Senators':
https://nebraskalegislature.gov/senators/senator_list.php
2. Let fellow Nebraskans know you support passage of LB 158 and encourage their support. One of the best ways to inform people and garner support is to email or call your friends and ask them to contact 3 of their friends.

Others supporting passage of LB 158:

Civic Nebraska, RISE (<https://www.seeurise.org/>), a Nebraska nonprofit organization offering in-prison programs for breaking down barriers for reentry into the community after incarceration, and

ACLU of Nebraska (<https://www.aclunebraska.org/en/campaigns/re-entry-nebraska>).