

**LETTER IN SUPPORT OF
THE DEMOCRACY RESTORATION ACT
FROM LAW ENFORCEMENT AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE ORGANIZATIONS**

December 16, 2011

Dear Member of Congress:

We, the undersigned law enforcement and criminal justice leaders, urge you to support and co-sponsor the Democracy Restoration Act, a bill which seeks to restore federal voting rights to the nearly four million Americans living, working and paying taxes in our communities who have been disenfranchised because of a criminal conviction in their past. We support the restoration of voting rights because continuing to disenfranchise individuals after release from prison is ineffective law enforcement policy and violates core principles of democracy and equality.

There is no credible evidence that denying voting rights to people after release from prison does anything to reduce crime. In our judgment, just the opposite is true. Every year over 600,000 people leave prison. We must find new and effective ways to foster reintegration back into the community and prevent recidivism. We believe that bringing people into the political process makes them stakeholders in the community and helps steer former offenders away from future crimes.

The hallmark of a democratic government is that it reflects the views of the governed, views that are most readily expressed through the ballot box. As law enforcement and criminal justice officials, we are deeply committed to securing our system of American democracy. Carving a segment of the community out of the democratic process is inconsistent with America's best traditions and highest values.

People who commit crimes must and will serve all terms of their sentence. But once the criminal justice system has determined that they are ready to return to the community, they should receive both the rights and responsibilities that come with the status of being a citizen. Restoring the right to vote is simply good law enforcement policy.

To protect basic public safety and strengthen the core of our democracy, we urge you to use your leadership to pass this important legislation.

(continued)

Sincerely,

American Correctional Association

Association of Paroling Authorities International

American Probation and Parole Association

James H. Austen

Former board member, Tennessee Board of Probation & Parole

Blacks in Law Enforcement of America

Correctional Association of New York

Charles J. Hynes

District Attorney, Kings County, New York

International Community Corrections Association

Doug Jones

Former U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Alabama

Peg Lautenschlager

Former Attorney General of Wisconsin

Former U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Wisconsin

Jorge Montes, Principal at Montes & Associates

Former Chairman, Illinois Prisoner Review Board

Oklahoma Department of Corrections

Police Foundation

Providence Police Department

Rhode Island Department of Corrections