

Memo

Re: Kentucky Rights Restoration Bill

To: Nicole Porter, The Sentencing Project

From: Chris Uggen, MayMay Seymour, Rob Stewart, Sarah Shannon, Ryan Larson

Date: 3/2/26

The Questions

Thank you for reaching out to us regarding the proposal to restore voting rights in Kentucky after completion of imprisonment, probation, or parole. We write in reply to your 2/21/26 email requesting an estimate on *how many people would remain disenfranchised if Senate Bill 80 (An ACT proposing an amendment to Section 145 of the Constitution of Kentucky relating to restoration of rights) is not amended given the following provisions?*

1. The bill restores voting rights at sentence completion; the coalition would like voting rights restored for people who are no longer incarcerated including persons on felony probation and parole;
2. The bill excludes people with certain offenses - involving election fraud, violent felony offenses, felony sexual offenses, or crimes against a child - the coalition wants no persons excluded from the reform.

Data and Assumptions

This is a difficult question to answer but we will try to provide a reasonable estimate given the urgency of the question. Based on preliminary analysis of the available data, it appears that the vast majority of the exclusions would involve those convicted of violent felonies (which includes felony sexual offenses and violence against children; by comparison, relatively few people are convicted of election fraud offenses).

The table below considers 4 scenarios, all starting out with the numbers in our 2024 *Locked Out* report. These include (1) a baseline or “Kentucky Status Quo” estimate; (2) an inclusive “Restoration for All Non-Incarcerated” estimate; (3) a more limited “Non-Violent and Non-Incarcerated” restoration estimate; and, (4) a more speculative “All Non-Violent Restored at Sentence Completion” estimate. For each scenario we first list the number who would remain disenfranchised and then list the number who would be restored (in comparison to the baseline status quo number).

Based on Kentucky-specific data from 2017-2022, we can conservatively estimate that this “violent” exclusion would affect approximately 14.0% of the probation population and approximately 25.4% of the parole population in Kentucky. Because Kentucky already restores voting rights upon completion of sentence for most people convicted of non-violent felonies, it is difficult to determine how many *additional* people disenfranchised post-sentence would have their rights restored under the current bill – this will depend a lot on changes to the specific exclusions. To provide a rough estimate, however, we apply the estimated probation rate of 14.0% in the third and fourth scenario.

The following table shows the baseline estimate in the first line. The second set of figures shows the projected impact of a very inclusive bill – restoring rights to *all non-incarcerated Kentuckians convicted of felonies*. This would restore voting rights to an estimated 131,877 people, reducing the state’s disenfranchisement rate from about 4.5% of the voting age population to about 0.6% of the voting age population.

The third set of estimates pertains to rights restoration for Non-Violent and Non-Incarcerated people only. If voting rights are restored to only non-violent non-incarcerated Kentuckians, about 28,087 would regain voting rights and the state’s disenfranchisement rate would remain relatively high, at about 3.7% of the voting age population. The last and more speculative scenario shows a very limited expansion of voting eligibility in which rights are only extended to a subset of those who had completed their sentences and who had not already had their rights restored.

Kentucky: Remaining Disenfranchisement Under Different Bill Scenarios								
	Prison	Parole	Felony Probation	Jail	Completed Sentence	Total # Remaining	Voting-eligible pop.	Disf. Rate
1. Kentucky Status Quo (2024)	18,552	15,881	36,882	2,299	79,114	152,728	3,362,354	4.5%
2. Restores ALL NON- INCARCERATED	18,552	0	0	2,299	0	20,851	3,362,354	0.6%
#Restored	0	15,881	36,882	0	79,114	131,877		
3. Restores Only NON-VIOLENT and NON- INCARCERATED	18,552	4,034	5,163	2,299	68,038	98,086	3,362,354	2.9%
#Restored	0	11,847	31,719	0	11,076	54,642		
4. Restores Only NON-VIOLENT at SENTENCE COMPLETION	18,552	15,881	36,882	2,299	68,038	141,652	3,362,354	4.2%
#Restored	0	0	0	0	11,076	11,076		

Conclusion

Of the options on the table, the greatest impact would come from a bill that *restores rights for all non-incarcerated persons*. Under this scenario, about 131,877 would regain voting rights. Restricting restoration to only non-incarcerated persons convicted of non-violent offenses would only expand rights to about 54,642 Kentuckians. And further limiting its scope to include only those convicted of non-violent offenses after sentence completion would further diminish its impact.