



YOU CAN VOTE IOWA

Voting laws are different in different states. It used to be that in Iowa if you had a certain type of criminal record, you couldn't vote without special approval from the Governor.

But in 2020, the law in Iowa changed. Now, people with just about any kind of criminal conviction, including felonies, can vote as long as they've discharged their sentences.

WHO CAN VOTE?

If you have anything less than a felony, like an aggravated misdemeanor, you're fine. You can vote. If you DO have a felony conviction, you can vote IF BOTH:

1. your conviction wasn't for homicide (including manslaughter and vehicular homicide) and;
2. you've discharged your sentence, including jail or prison, probation, parole, supervised release, and special sentence.

Important note: You can vote as long as you're not incarcerated, and are off probation or parole and not incarcerated.

HOW DO I REGISTER TO VOTE?

You can register to vote just about any time before the election, or on the day of the election, right at your polling place.

There are lots of different ways to register to vote, including online.

HOW DO I KNOW THAT I'VE COMPLETED MY SENTENCE?

Once you have officially discharged your sentence, you should receive papers in the mail informing you of that. If you're still not sure, check with your attorney, probation, or parole officer.

WHAT IF I STILL OWE MONEY FOR RESTITUTION OR OTHER FEES OR FINES?

As long as you've discharged your felony sentence, you can vote. Your right to vote isn't connected to how much you still owe, even if you're behind on payments. You don't even need to be set up on any payment plan. You just have to have discharged your sentence.

CAN I VOTE IF I'M ON PROBATION?

If your probation is for a deferred judgment or for a misdemeanor, yes. If you have a felony, and your felony sentence includes probation,

no, you can't vote. You have to discharge your sentence.

Bottom line: If you have a felony conviction, you can't vote until after you've discharged your sentence.

WHAT IF I'M BEING KEPT ON PROBATION LONGER BECAUSE I CAN'T PAY MY FINES AND FEES?

If that's the case, you haven't discharged your felony sentence and, unfortunately, you still can't vote yet.

WHAT IF I HAVE A DEFERRED JUDGMENT FOR A FELONY AND I'M ON PROBATION. CAN I VOTE?

Yes. A deferred judgment isn't yet a conviction. If you have a deferred judgment, you can vote, even though you may not be out of the probation period for that deferred judgment.

However, if you didn't complete your probation and the felony conviction was entered against you, you will need to wait until you discharge your sentence for that felony in order to vote.

MY FELONY CONVICTION WAS IN A STATE OTHER THAN IOWA. CAN I VOTE?

There are three different ways an out of state felony conviction could impact you:

1. If you have a felony conviction from another state, and that state restored your voting rights, you can vote in Iowa—even if you're on probation or parole from that state but were allowed to move to Iowa. (Some states restore voting rights to people as long as they aren't incarcerated, even if they are still on probation or parole.)
2. If you have a felony conviction from another state, and that state never took away your voting rights, you can vote in Iowa—even if you're still on probation or parole from that state but were allowed to move to Iowa. (Some states never take away voting rights based on a criminal conviction.)
3. If you have a felony conviction from another state, and that state took away your voting rights and has not restored them, then the Governor's EO applies to you. That means you can vote in Iowa once you discharge your sentence, including completing any probation or parole. (But your restoration of rights in Iowa only applies in Iowa. It won't apply back in the state of your felony conviction, if you move back there.)

KEY POINTS

It's important to vote. Having been through the criminal justice system, you have important real-life experience. Nothing will get changed if you don't speak up and vote.

- If you were convicted of a misdemeanor, you can vote.
- If you were charged with a felony, but have a deferred judgment, you can vote.
- If you were convicted of a felony, you can vote in Iowa as long as: 1) it wasn't a homicide conviction and 2) you've discharged your sentence, that is you've finished any incarceration, parole, probation, and special sentence.
- Once you've discharged your sentence, you do NOT have to pay off any fees, fines, or restitution before voting.

Not sure? Have questions? Have an out-of-state felony? Check with your attorney or probation or parole officer. Or go www.youcanvoteiowa or www.aclu-ia.org/vote.

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