

**MOTION BY SUPERVISOR MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS
AND SHEILA KUEHL**

FEBRUARY 13, 2018

Expanding Voter and Civic Engagement of Justice-Involved Populations

Civic engagement and voting are the cornerstones of democracy. Unfortunately, those with justice-system involvement have been particularly disconnected from the electoral process. There are also rampant misconceptions about the capacity of individuals with current or previous involvement with the criminal justice system to participate in elections. The majority of those in county jails are actually eligible to vote, as are individuals on probation and sentenced to post-release community supervision.

Voter engagement also contributes to crime prevention. A 2011 report by the Florida Parole Commission showed that those leaving incarceration with their voting rights restored had a recidivism rate one-third lower than those who did not have their rights restored. As such, California has taken steps to restore voting rights to persons with criminal convictions, including those impacted by Assembly Bill 109.

Supporting justice-involved populations in becoming civically engaged extends beyond voter registration. While not a necessity in California, in most instances, access

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to vital records like a birth certificate and identification (ID) card enhance one's ability to participate in the voting process. Having an ID card also helps with other activities needed to successfully reintegrate, such as utilizing transportation, getting a job, renting an apartment, and more, which in turn reduce recidivism rates.

On December 17, 2013 and January 28, 2014, the Los Angeles County (County) Board of Supervisors (Board) approved two motions by Supervisor Ridley-Thomas for youth and adults to receive their vital records during the reentry process. Recent data from the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD) and the Probation Department reveals some gradual successes. In 2016, 2,117 birth certificates and 1,097 California ID cards were administered by the LASD in the County jails. However, implementation challenges remain, particularly in obtaining and tracking vital records to youth in custody and adults and youth under community supervision. One of the impediments has been the Probation Department's inability to establish a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Motor Vehicles.

The County would benefit from expanding strategies to increase electoral turnout and further facilitate the reentry of justice-system involved youth and adults. The Office of Diversion and Reentry (ODR) has become the County hub for supporting successful reentry. As ODR implements new comprehensive reentry services, there is an opportunity to develop initiatives tied to voter and civic engagement.

WE THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

1. Instruct the Director of the Office of Diversion and Reentry (ODR), in

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collaboration with the Los Angeles County (County) Registrar Recorder/County Clerk, the Interim Public Defender, Alternate Public Defender, Chief Probation Officer, the Sheriff, the Chief Executive Officer, County Counsel, and relevant community stakeholders, to develop a Countywide plan for voter education and registration of eligible justice-involved individuals, both current and former, due to the Board of Supervisors in writing in 90 days that includes:

- a. Public education and outreach campaigns to address misperceptions about voter eligibility and to promote civic and electoral engagement as part of the reentry process for justice-involved youth and adults.
 - b. A role for community-based organizations in the Countywide plan focused on voter education, outreach and registration; and
 - c. Recommendations for ongoing funding and staffing needs required to implement these efforts, including use of the Inmate Welfare Fund.
2. Instruct the Director of ODR, in collaboration with the Sheriff's Department, Probation Department, and other key stakeholders, to report back in writing within 90 days with recommended actions to develop and standardize procedures for providing and tracking the distribution of vital records, including birth certificates and state-issued identification cards, to justice-involved youth and adults in the County, as part of the reentry process.

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(DJJ/MN)