



MEDIA RELEASE

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Absentee Voting conducted at DC Jail ahead of General Election

Inmates in District detention facilities exercise their right to vote

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) – Yesterday, the District of Columbia Board of Elections (DCBOE) led a joint effort with the District of Columbia Office of Human Rights (OHR) and several other community-based partners to ensure absentee voting for residents at the Central Detention Facility and the Correctional Treatment Facility, also known as the DC Jail. Ahead of next week’s general election, OHR along with the National Association for The Advancement of Returning Citizens (NAARC), Citizens United for The Rehabilitation of Errant (CURE), The National Reentry Network and Woman Involved in Reentry Efforts the (WIRE) participated in the day by helping incarcerated DC residents exercise their right to vote. As a leading jurisdiction in fair chance policies and practices, the District is one of only a few cities in the country that affords residents serving misdemeanor sentence and those awaiting trial for non-felony offenses the opportunity to vote, as well as restores individuals’ right to vote upon completion of their sentence.

“The District leads the country in efforts to ensure returning citizens don’t face additional barriers to employment so they can start a new life” said OHR Director Mónica Palacio. “Our Mayor and our government want to give all District residents a chance to have a voice and a vote and through partnerships such as this one we can to ensure all residents have a voice in the future of our city and our country.”

According to a 2012 USA Today report, many states including the District of Columbia bar individuals serving time on a felony conviction from voting. Yet, many of these states do allow individuals awaiting trial or serving sentences for misdemeanor offenses to vote, however only a handful play an active role in educating and empowering incarcerated citizens to exercise their right. Despite this trend, the District for several years has gone into detention facilities hosting DC residents to ensure their inmates get a fair vote.

“The District of Columbia Board of Elections for a while has been at the forefront of providing voting opportunities to individuals who have been incarcerated for a non-felony” said DCBOE Chairman, Michael Bennett. “The right to vote is a fundamental right, and should be offered to all qualified residents in the appropriate manner. The Board will continue to work with other District government agencies to ensure that voting is made available to all, as we strive to set a positive example to our returning residents.”

Mayor Muriel Bowser recently stated, “No one can deny that incarceration has had a major impact on our community both socially and economically, with tens of thousands of District residents having been involved in the criminal-justice system at some point.” This effort seeks to ensure that their voices are still heard in the electoral process.

Exactly 44 ballots were collected at the DC Jail and will join the over 70,000 early and absentee ballots from the District to decide the next President of the United States as well as other local officials.

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About the District of Columbia Board of Elections

The District of Columbia Board of Elections (DCBOE) is the independent agency of the District government responsible for the administration of elections, ballot access and voter registration. DCBOE consists of three active Board members, an Executive Director, a General Counsel and a number of support staff who run the day-to-day operations of the Agency.

About the District of Columbia Office of Human Rights

The District of Columbia Office of Human Rights (OHR) was established to eradicate discrimination, increase equal opportunity and protect human rights for persons who live in or visit the District of Columbia. The agency enforces local and federal human rights laws, including the DC Human Rights Act, by providing a legal process to those who believe they have been discriminated against. OHR also proactively enforces human rights in the District through Director's Inquiries, which allow it to identify and investigate practices and policies that may be discriminatory.



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