

Senate Elections Committee – Jan. 17, 2023

Chair Carlson, members, my name is George Beck. I am on the Board of Clean Elections Minnesota.

We support expanding the electorate to include all who are affected by our government. We support a true representative democracy in which the people control policy-making by voting. We do not support control of elected officials through large private contributions.

And we support Senator Champion's S.F. 0026, which allows released felons to vote and rejoin our community like other citizens. Fourteen states and the District of Columbia provide for this to happen. Minnesota needs to join these other progressive states.

I read an op-ed in the Star Tribune that opposed restoring the rights of released felons. I read it carefully and the only point that seemed very rational at all was that it was appropriate to continue to punish released felons. But that makes no sense. They have served their time.

Minnesota judges seem to favor long probationary periods for certain offenders and offenses. So someone can be in the community but be unable to vote for 20 or 30 years despite good behavior. That makes no sense.

An individual's civil right to vote should be restored when incarceration is completed. We urge the committee to vote in favor of this bill.

Thank you.