**Unlock The Vote: The Midwest Climate**

Wisconsin's neighboring states have all passed policy changes to allow felons (people with a felony conviction) more access to voting. For example, Minnesota and Michigan have eliminated felony disenfranchisement and restored people with a felony conviction their voting rights once released from prison, regardless of their status on parole, probation, or extended supervision. Therefore, the state of Wisconsin should want to move towards aligning with our neighboring state's policies. In that case, the state must Unlock The Vote and allow the estimated 51,018 Wisconsinites currently disenfranchised to vote once released and restore their civil rights. The report below will detail Wisconsin's neighboring states' actions used to Unlock The Vote and the change in language in these different states' statutes or constitutions.

**Minnesota**

Originally, Minnesota's state constitution in Article VII: Elective Franchise stated that anyone convicted of a felony or treason was ineligible to vote unless restored to civil rights. This section of the state's constitution was challenged in Minnesota's Supreme Court in the case of [Schroeder v. Minnesota Secretary of State](https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/field_document/complaint_-_schroeder_v._minnesota_secretary_of_state.pdf). The court rejected legal arguments that Article VII was unconstitutional and upheld Minnesota's ineligibility criteria. The state's legislature pushed to pass House Bill 28, which restored voting rights for people with felony convictions once released. Working together, the Governor and the Minnesota legislature made robust legislation that restored voting rights for more than 55,000 Minnesotians.

**Michigan**

As of 1975, Michigan has allowed people with a felony conviction the right to vote once released from prison and has only deemed citizens ineligible to vote if serving time in jail or prison. Within the Michigan State Constitution, it states in Article II Elections that persons excluded from voting include anyone committed to a jail or penal institution. Michigan is one of 25 states that have restored the right to vote for people with felony convictions, which allows them to exercise their full civil rights.

**Iowa**

Iowa was the last state in the country that had lifetime felony disenfranchisement. As of August 5th, 2020, people with a felony conviction have had voting rights restored after the completion of their sentence, including time on probation, parole, and extended supervision. The change in the law comes after Governor Kim Reynolds signed Executive Order 7, which restored voting rights for people with felony convictions and eliminated Iowa's "Last in Nation Status." Executive Order 7 still enforces lifetime felony disenfranchisement on anyone with a felony conviction that violates Chapter 707 of Iowa's code which is considered Homicide and related crimes, and forces these individuals to apply for restoration of their voting rights. Political shifts like the ones observed in Iowa highlight the growing movement to restore felons' voting rights even in the historically harshest states.

**Illinois**

The Illinois constitution states under Article III Suffrage and Elections that a person convicted of a felony has their voting rights restored once released from prison. Additionally, Illinois has passed House Bill 2541, which requires correctional and Juvenile Justice facilities to provide nonpartisan peer-led civics programs on voting rights, voter registration, and elections. Bills like HB 2541 promote civic engagement and help people returning home from prison feel a part of their communities.

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**Citations**

**Minnesota**

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<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/bills/text.php?number=HF28&type=bill&version=2&session=ls93&session_year=2023&session_number=0>

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**Iowa**

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<https://governor.iowa.gov/sites/default/files/documents/EO7%20-%20Voting%20Restoration.pdf>

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**Illinois**

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<https://ccresourcecenter.org/state-restoration-profiles/illinois-restoration-of-rights-pardon-expungement-sealing/>

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<https://expowisconsin.org/get-involved/unlock-the-vote/>