

Kendall LeVan Hodson
Chief of Staff
King County Elections

Andrea Williams
Program Manager
King County Adult
and Juvenile Detention

Tracy Crow
Corrections Captain
King County Adult
and Juvenile Detention

Voting in Jail

King County Elections

**King County Adult
and Juvenile Detention Center**



Overview

- History of voting rights in Washington State
- National context
- Incarcerated voter outreach
- Voter education and registration events in detention facilities
- Challenges and lessons learned
- Next steps





Washington

Original Washington
Constitution, Article VI, Section
3 disallows voting for those
convicted of “infamous crime.”

1889

2009

State House Bill 1517 removes
requirement that those
convicted of a felony fully repay
their legal financial obligations
(LFOs) before the right to vote is
restored.

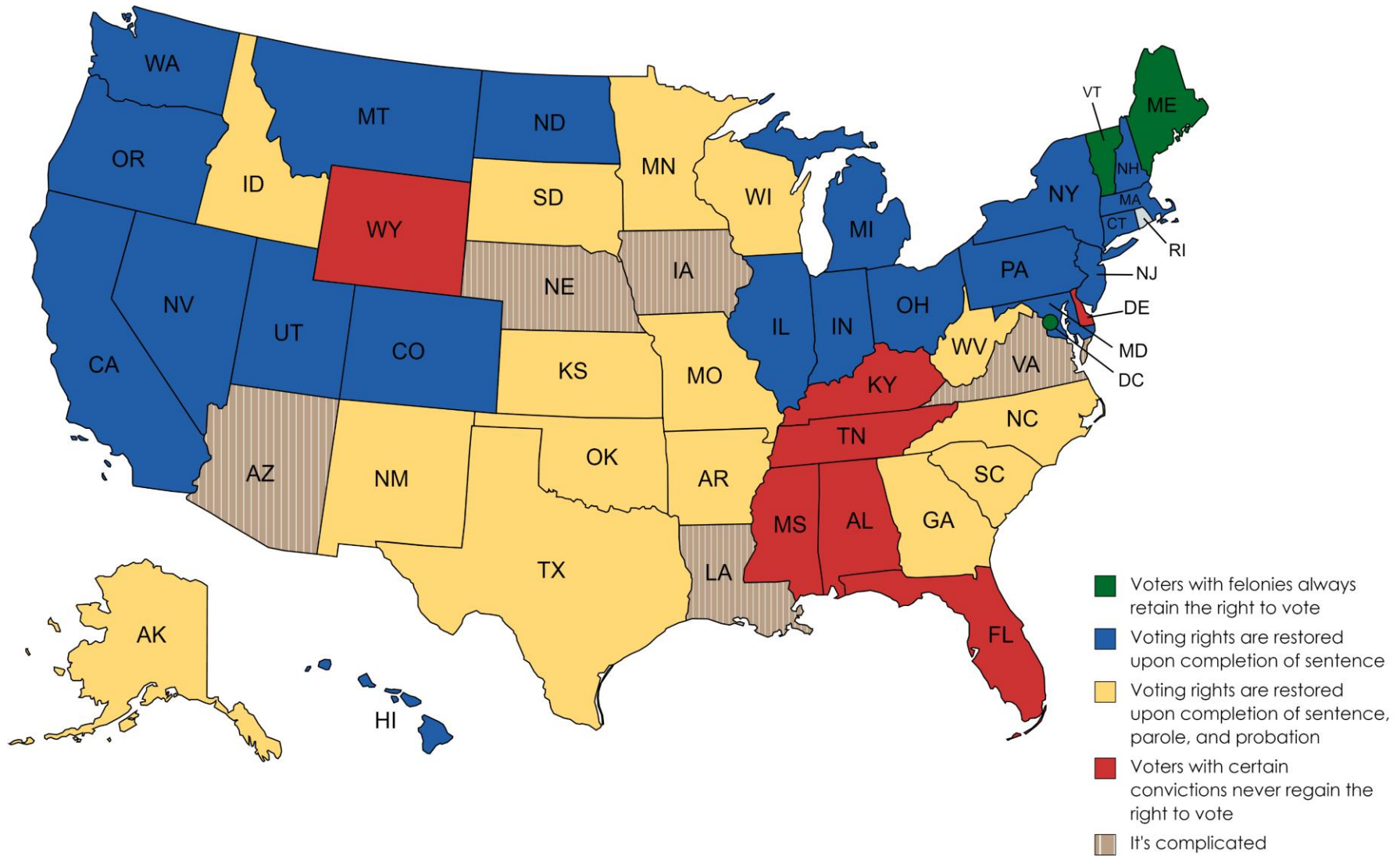
State House Bill 1078
automatically restores voting
rights to those convicted of a
felony once they are no
longer incarcerated.

2021



Nationally

-
- **Washington is one of 21 states to automatically restore voting rights after voters leave prison**
 - **Maine, Vermont, and the District of Columbia never take away the right to vote**
 - **In seven states, voters with certain felony convictions never regain the right to vote**





Incarcerated Voter Outreach

- Inmate Information Handbook updates
- Training and information sharing with KC Department of Public Defense
- Inmate Survey

Inmate Information Handbook Updates



2017

“You may be eligible to vote in upcoming primary or general elections. Your family may forward your unopened ballot to you while you are in custody or you can contact King County Elections at 206-296-8663 to update your mailing address and have a ballot sent to you here at the jail. King County Elections will accept your ballot even though you completed it in pencil. When finished voting, return your sealed ballot to the mail room. It will be mailed to King County Elections as county expense.”

2021

1 ¼ pages of voting information, including

- How to request voter registration card from the mail room
- Other forms available from the mail room including voter pamphlets relevant to each voting session, available in English and four additional languages
- Change of language forms
- Informational voting pamphlet about voting with a felony conviction
- A mailing address and two free phone numbers

2022

1 ½ pages with more specific, detailed information, including

- Instruction on how to watch KCTV from jail to view video statements from candidates
- Information about our ADA Coordinator
- Voting Rights Restoration information (HB 1078)

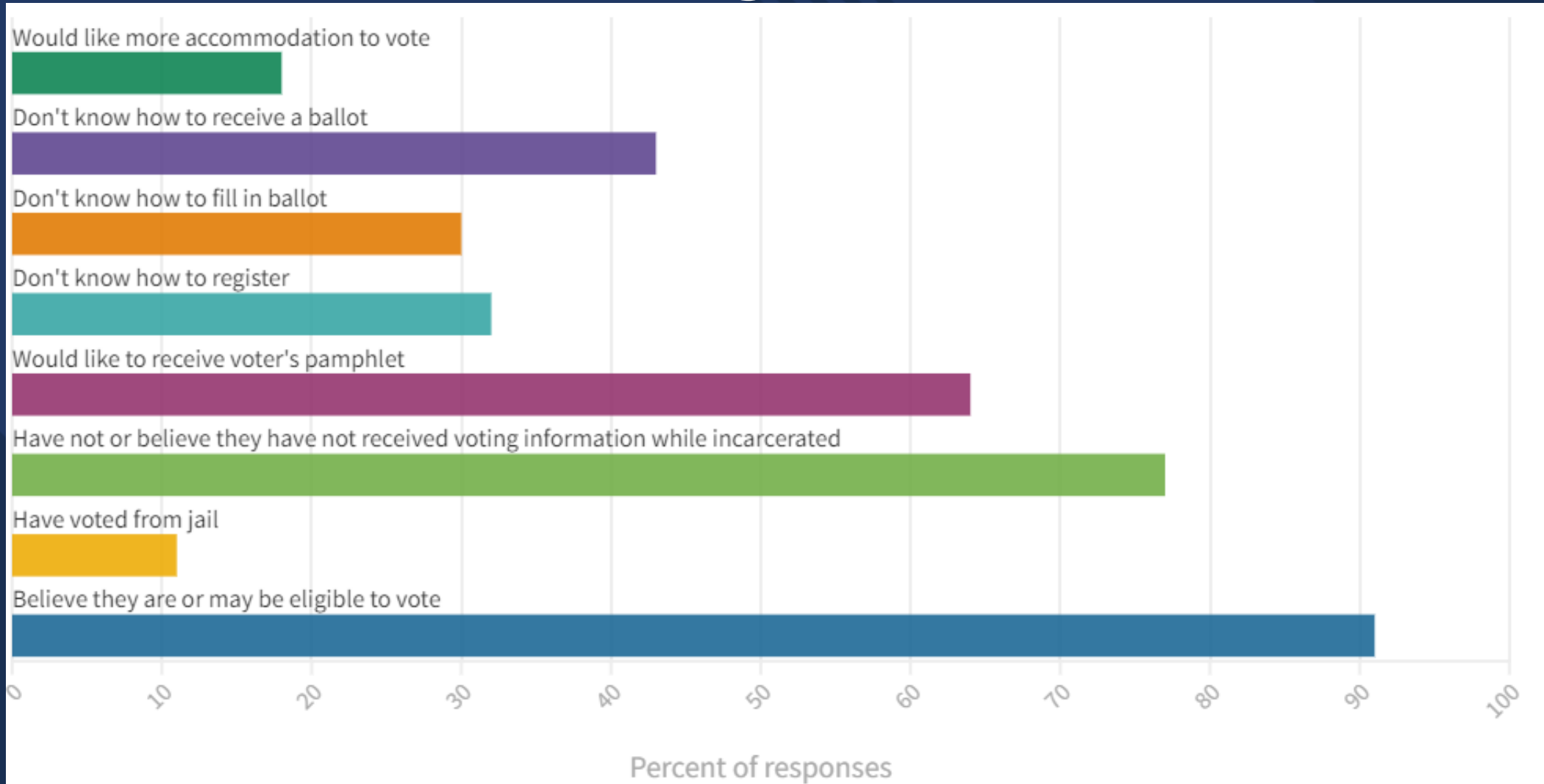


Inmate Survey

- Created to gain incarcerated voter input regarding whether they had the information and access required to vote
- Created in partnership with DAJD and community partners including the ACLU and Disability Rights Washington
- Provided in bed rolls in summer 2022
- As of November 2022, 53 had been returned



Inmate Survey Results





Department of Public Defense

- 2020
 - Voter registration and education training first provided by KCE
- 2022
 - Provided information about upcoming voting events leading up to the November General Election for attorneys to share with their clients



Youth Detention Center

- Partnership with Seattle University Access to Justice Institute
- Voter education and registration event prior to November 2022 General Election
- KCE staff presented to 7 detained girls

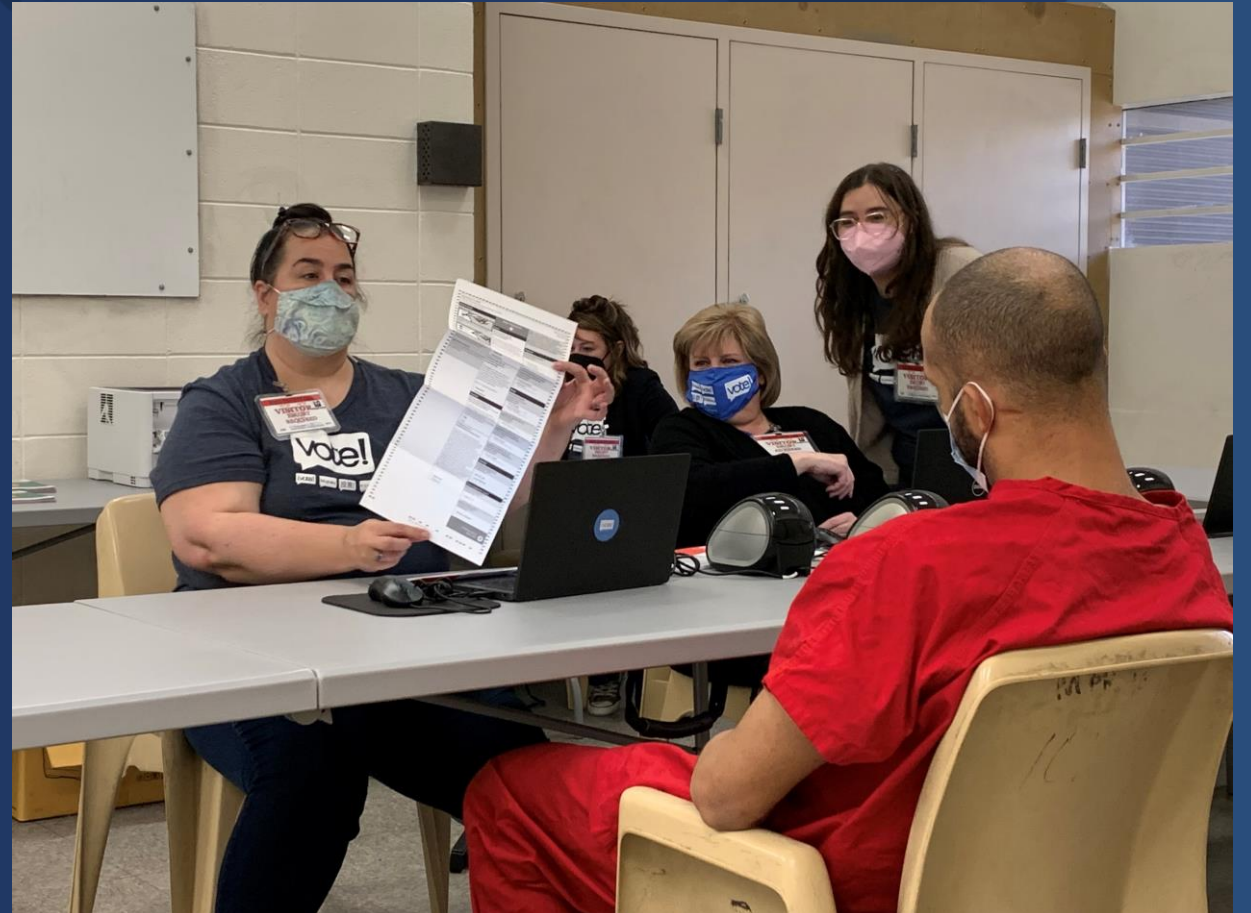


Photograph by Matt M. McKnight, for Crosscut

King County Correctional Facility Seattle



- Two education and registration events prior to the November 2022 General Election
- Held on two consecutive Saturday morning
- Served 45 voters on each Saturday (90 voters total)



Challenges & Solutions

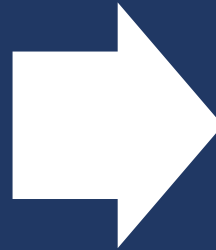


DAJD was concerned about allowing a face-to-face interaction in a larger group setting.



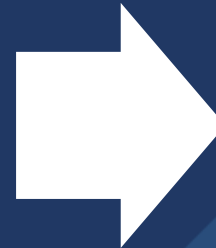
Establishing support from the Director generated support from remaining management (Commanders to Sergeants).

Due to staffing issues, we did not have an officer available to stay with Elections staff for the duration of the event.



Captain Craw volunteered to work those days and check in on them at both locations.

Individuals in custody in possession of ink pens is a security risk, as pens can be used as weapons.



Resolved by purchasing [ASR Federal Non-Lethal Flexible Ball Point Pen Writing Tool](#).



Background Checks

- **Challenges included:**
 - Communication
 - Procedural issues
 - Staffing shortage
- **Usually take weeks to accomplish**
- **Process felt cumbersome and unwieldy to all**



Security Solutions



- **DAJD allowed**
 - **laptops**
 - **a mouse for each laptop**
 - **one table-top printer**
 - **electrical cords and tape (for securing the electrical cords)**
 - **one County issued smart phone communication with MFA**
- **Events were restricted to individuals in General Populations**
- **Established a one-to-one ratio, with one extra Elections staff running the printer**
- **Determined that 1st shift, Saturday and Sunday, were best: no/limited court sessions, limited inmate movement, fewer attorney/client visits, and few programs running**



Unexpected Benefits

- Many DAJD staff were unaware of the 2022 change in the law allowing for restoration of voting rights
- DAJD staff questions were answered
- DAJD created a written summary for contemporaneous and future use
- Very positive experience for elections staff, who focused on respect and customer service
- Elections staff gained confidence in effectively serving this community and are excited to do it again



Next Steps



- **State grant**
- **Report to Secretary of State on efforts**
- **Expansion**
 - **To other facilities**
 - **During other elections**
 - **To reach more voters**



Questions?