



NEWS RELEASE

CALIFORNIA SECRETARY OF STATE ALEX PADILLA

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Secretary Padilla Ends Appeal of Scott v. Bowen Case *Settlement will Restore Voting Rights to Thousands of Californians*

In a ruling last year, the Alameda Superior Court concluded that low-level offenders who are subject to mandatory supervision or post-release community supervision under the Public Safety Realignment Act are eligible to register to vote under Article II, Section 4 of the California Constitution.

The ruling in that case, *Scott v. Bowen*, was subsequently appealed by the previous Secretary of State administration.

Today, California Secretary of State Alex Padilla is announcing both an end to the appeal and a settlement that ends a policy that disenfranchised thousands of Californians.

Californians subject to post-release community supervision or mandatory supervision under Realignment will be eligible to register to vote once the court has officially dismissed the appeal.

“Passage of the Voting Rights Act was not easily won,” Secretary Padilla said. “People marched. People struggled. People died. They bravely sacrificed for each other – for friends, family, for our country so that each of us could be empowered with the opportunity to participate meaningfully in our democracy.”

“Civic engagement and participation in the election process can be an important factor helping former offenders reintegrate into civil society. If we are serious about slowing the revolving door at our jails and prisons, and serious about reducing recidivism, we need to engage—not shun—former-offenders. Voting is a key part of that engagement; it is part of a process of becoming vested and having a stake in the community,” Padilla added.

“The United States Supreme Court eloquently proclaimed, “No right is more precious in a free country than that of having a voice in the election of those who make the laws under which, as good citizens, we must live. Other rights, even the most basic, are illusory if the right to vote is undermined.”

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“Our California Supreme Court has made similar pronouncements: “No construction of an election law should be indulged that would disenfranchise any voter if the law is reasonably susceptible of any other meaning.”

“Today’s announcement is in line with these statements, the arc of California history, and the spirit of the Voting Rights Act,” Padilla said.

“Today we take a step forward towards a more inclusive democracy,” said Helen Hutchison, president of the League of Women Voters of California. “We applaud Secretary Padilla’s efforts to restore voting rights to the disenfranchised. Our democracy is strongest when all eligible Californians can express their values and shape their community by voting.”

“There is persistent confusion nationwide, among election officials and the public, about criminal disenfranchisement policies,” Myrna Pérez, deputy director of the Democracy Program at the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law said. “This results in the mass dissemination of inaccurate and misleading information, which leads to disenfranchisement of untold hundreds of thousands of eligible would-be voters. We’re thrilled California has taken an important step to reduce that confusion. No citizen living and working in the community should be disenfranchised because of a criminal conviction in her past.”

"We have always recognized that our voting rights are larger than the right to cast a vote - it's about the struggle for formerly and in some cases currently incarcerated people to be respected as citizens," said Dorsey Nunn, Executive Director of Legal Services for Prisoners with Children and a taxpayer plaintiff in *Scott v. Bowen*. “Our votes belong not just to us, but to our communities and families.”

“Every day probation officers are working to reduce recidivism and help former offenders successfully reenter their communities,” Jerry Powers Los Angeles County Chief Probation Officer said. “My department sees firsthand just how powerful it is to engage former offenders in the community and to promote civic participation. Ensuring Californians under realignment have the right to vote will help facilitate their reentry into society and reduce the likelihood that they will commit new crimes.”

[Click here to read Secretary Padilla’s full remarks from today’s press conference to announce the Scott v. Bowen settlement.](#)

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