



Rule of Law Clinic
at Yale Law School



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Via Email

Peggy Reeves
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Dear Ms. Reeves:

Thank you for speaking with us over the phone earlier this month. We realize that your time is valuable, and that you are particularly busy in the last weeks before Election Day.

As you may recall, we discussed a document titled “Connecticut Secretary of State Voting Fact Sheet for Restoring Voting Rights.” Based on our conversation, our understanding is that your office has partially rewritten this document to correct the error we noticed. We promised to keep an eye out for an updated version of the fact sheet on the Secretary of State’s website, and to reach out to you with any requests for further corrections or clarifications. As best we can tell, no corrected information has been posted on the Secretary of State’s website so far.¹

In light of all this, we want to call your attention again to the version of the Voting Fact Sheet for Restoring Voting Rights that is currently available on the website. This document still indicates, incorrectly, that Connecticut residents with Connecticut felony convictions sometimes must pay fines to regain the right to vote: “A person who has been convicted of a felony and committed to confinement in a state of CT correctional institution, or facility, or community residence shall be eligible to have their voting privileges restored upon the release from confinement, parole, and payments of any fines (if applicable).” The fact sheet is available at https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sots/ElectionServices/VoterFactSheets/2017/ct_restoring_voting_rights_voter_fact_sheet_2017.pdf?la=en. When someone searches on Google for information about restoring the right to vote in Connecticut, this incorrect fact sheet is one of the top results.

¹ The website does contain a separate fact sheet that correctly indicates that Connecticut residents with past Connecticut convictions need not pay fines as a condition of regaining their voting rights. This correct fact sheet, which predates our initial letter of October 9, is available at <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sots/ElectionServices/HAVA/HavaPDF/TheUltimateFreedompdf.pdf?la=en>.

To avoid giving eligible voters the misimpression that outstanding fines render them ineligible, we would ask that the language quoted about be replaced with the following:

A person who has been convicted of a felony and committed to confinement in a correctional institution, facility, or community residence of the State of Connecticut shall be eligible to have their voting privileges restored upon release from confinement and parole. A person has been convicted of a felony and committed to confinement in a correctional institution, facility, or community residence of another state or the federal government shall be eligible to have their voting privileges restored upon release from confinement, release from parole, and payment of any fines in conjunction with the conviction.

Similarly, there are several webpages on the Secretary of State's website that contain the following language:

Am I eligible to vote in CT?

- Are you at least 17 and turning 18 on or before Election Day?
- Are you a United States Citizen and a bona fide resident of some town in Connecticut?
- If you have been convicted of a felony, have you completed confinement and parole, and, if applicable, paid all fines in connection with your conviction?

Please note that if your conviction involved a violation of election law, then you should check with the Division of Criminal Justice before you attempt to register.

If you can answer YES to all three of these questions, you are eligible to vote in CT.²

This language should also be modified because it unreasonably puts the burden on prospective voters to research whether the payment-of-fines requirement is "applicable" to them, without indicating where the individual can find that information. After reading this language, a non-lawyer would reasonably believe that if she was previously incarcerated in a Connecticut facility for a felony, she may need to pay fines before regaining the right to vote. We therefore suggest that the above language should be modified as follows:

Am I eligible to vote in CT?

- *Are you at least 17 and turning 18 on or before Election Day?*

² We are aware of at least four webpages on the Secretary of State's website that use this language, or substantially identical language. They are located at the following addresses: (1) <https://portal.ct.gov/SOTS/Election-Services/Voter-Information/Voter-Fact-Sheet-First-Time-Voter>; (2) <https://portal.ct.gov/SOTS/Election-Services/Voter-Information/First-Time-Voter-Fact-Sheet>; (3) <https://portal.ct.gov/SOTS/Election-Services/Voter-Information/Student-Voter-Fact-Sheet>; (4) <https://portal.ct.gov/SOTS/Election-Services/Voter-Information/Homeless-Voter-Fact-Sheet>.

- *Are you a United States Citizen and a bona fide resident of some town in Connecticut?*
 - *If you have been convicted of a felony, have you completed confinement and parole?*
 - *If you have been confined for a felony in a federal facility or a facility of a state other than Connecticut, have you paid all fines in connection with your conviction?*
- Please note that if your conviction involved a violation of election law, then you should check with the Division of Criminal Justice before you attempt to register.*

If you can answer YES to all four of these questions, you are eligible to vote in CT.

In making these suggestions, we do not intend to burden you and your office, but rather to be helpful in your efforts to run fair and inclusive elections. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us with any questions or requests.

Sincerely,



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