



# COUNTY OF YOLO

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## **Criminal Justice Partners Engage in Voter Education & Outreach**

**(Woodland, CA)** – In partnership with the Yolo County Elections Office, the Yolo County Public Defender’s Office and the Yolo County Probation Department will conduct voter education and outreach to individuals impacted by the criminal-legal system. Voting allows people to have their voices heard and engage productively in their community. By engaging in the democratic process, voters practice pro-social skills, such as civic engagement and appropriate expression of beliefs and values. The two County offices want their clients and the general public to know that everyone in the community retains the right to vote, regardless of any misdemeanor or felony convictions.

Voters must register to vote by October 24 to be eligible to vote on election day – November 8. Probation will host their voter registration drive at their Woodland and West Sacramento Offices on October 6. The Public Defender’s Office will host a voter registration drive on National Voter Registration Day – September 20, 2022. In collaboration with Yolo County Children’s Alliance, the Public Defender’s Office will host this voter registration drive at Project Homekey in West Sacramento.

The Probation Department and Public Defender’s Office are putting up voting rights educational posters in their lobbies and making voter registration cards available to clients upon request. Many people have the incorrect impression that they lost their right to vote due to a criminal conviction. However, even Californians who are being supervised by Probation or Parole or serving a jail sentence are eligible to vote.

“We not only want people to know about their voting rights; we also want to make voting accessible,” said Emily Kochly, Chief Mitigation Specialist with the Public Defender’s Office. “Access to voting empowers people with lived or direct experience with the criminal legal system and allows them a means of changing the system and their community for the better.”

To target eligible voters who are currently in-custody, the Public Defender’s Office is sending out a mass mailer to individuals currently incarcerated in the county jail. This mailer will include information about voter eligibility and how to request and fill out a voter registration form while in the county jail.

“There is a high concentration of eligible voters in our county jail,” explained Public Defender Tracie Olson. “Since people of color are incarcerated at disproportionately higher rates, expanding voting access to individuals currently incarcerated advances racial justice.”

If you have a criminal conviction and want to check your eligibility to vote, you can use the Restore Your Vote tool on California’s Secretary of State’s webpage: <https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/restore-your-vote/>.

If you want additional information or resources about voting rights for individuals with criminal convictions, visit the ACLU’s Let Me Vote webpage: <https://www.letmevote.org/resources/>.

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