**VOTING RIGHTS OF FELONS**

**By Sharon Bass**

A felony conviction may result in the loss of voting rights in Texas—but not forever.

A person who is convicted of a felony in the State of Texas is not eligible to register to vote—or to vote in an election if already registered—until he or she has successfully completed his or her felony sentence. This includes any term of incarceration, parole, supervision, period of probation, or pardoned.[[1]](#footnote-1) He or she must also register to vote at least 30 days prior to an election date to be eligible.[[2]](#footnote-2) Voting illegally in Texas is a second-degree felony punishable by up to 20 years in prison[[3]](#footnote-3).

**Can some felons vote?**

Yes. A qualified registered voter without a "final felony conviction", or adjudication of guilt may vote under certain circumstances:

* A conviction on appeal is not considered a final felony conviction. A person confined in jail "pending trial or an appeal of a conviction after denial of bail or without bail, or where release on bail before election day is unlikely" may apply for a ballot by mail.[[4]](#footnote-4)
* "Deferred adjudication" is not considered a final felony conviction.[[5]](#footnote-5)
* "Mere prosecution, indictment or other criminal procedures leading up to, but not yet resulting in the final conviction, are not final felony convictions."[[6]](#footnote-6)

In 1997, George W. Bush, as Governor of Texas, also restored voting rights to ex-offenders upon completing their felony sentences when he signed legislation that eliminated the two-year waiting period for felons, after conclusion of their parole, to vote.

1. Texas Election Code, §11.002 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Texas Secretary of State (VoteTexas.gov) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Texas Election Code, §64.012 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Texas Secretary of State (VoteTexas.gov) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Texas Code of Criminal Procedure, Art. 42.12, Sec. 5 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Texas Secretary of State (VoteTexas.gov) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)