EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

"A Social Statement on The Church and Criminal Justice: Hearing the Cries" (2013)

VII.D.2. Foster full reintegration of ex-offenders: Collateral sanctions

When someone is convicted of a crime and a judge imposes the sentence, many invisible 'collateral sanctions' are indirectly, and silently, added. These punishments are defined through legislation and restrict the rights of ex-offenders after release. Such restrictions may include denial of the right to vote, restricted access to public housing, ineligibility for public assistance or educational loans, and barriers to employment for their entire lives due both to employers' increased access to criminal records and to exclusion from particular occupations. The stigmatization of these restrictions harms people personally as much as some restrictions harm them financially.

Beginning in the 1980s, state legislatures and the U.S. Congress created legislation expanding the use of collateral sanctions. Examples include an increase in the number of states that *permanently* deny convicted felons the right to participate in the democratic process by voting. It is likely that many U.S. citizens are unaware of the existence of such legal restrictions. This invisibility follows because, unlike prisons, these sanctions operate largely beyond public view, and are imposed through law rather than by a judge in a visible courtroom setting.

… The majority of invisible punishments…do not fit the criterion of necessity, and therefore are unjust. This statement concurs with the action of the American Bar Association that has called for 'restricting the reach of invisible punishment by limiting collateral sanctions to those that related directly to the offense charaged, and prohibiting sanctions that without justification, infringe on fundamental rights, or frustrate a convicted person's chances of successfully reentering society.' Pp. 46-47

Source: http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Criminal_JusticeSS.pdf

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)

Lift Every Voice: Democracy, Voting Rights, and Electoral Reform (2008)

Recommendation 2.b, Re-enfranchise felons who have paid their debt to society

Restoring the right to vote to ex-felons strengthens democracy by increasing voter investment in the system and provides incentives for ex-offenders to make more positive contributions to society. Political participation also helps people reintegrate into the community after serving time in prison. Re-enfranchisement also means that the home communities of those convicted regain their political voice and ability to elect representatives accountable to their needs and interests.

Source: https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/2-votingrights-2008.pdf

UNITARIAN-UNIVERSALIST ASSOCIATION

VOTING RIGHTS FOR COMMUNITIES OF COLOR

2007 Responsive Resolution

We urge Unitarian Universalists to seek insight into problems experienced by communities of color regarding voting. We make this resolution in response to the report by Rev. Sinkford at the second Plenary on our continued need to confront racism. Therefore,

Be it resolved that the delegates to the 2007 General Assembly are charged to work with their congregations on the following:

- Where possible, to partner in at least one program on issues of race and voting (such as intimidation, felon disenfranchisement, and voter identification requirements) with an engaged non-partisan organization such as the Urban League, the American Civil Liberties Union, the League of Women Voters, or a local community group,

- To seek opportunities for education and insight through personal interactions with people in communities of color regarding their experiences with voting, and

- To report key insights to their congregations and to next year's General Assembly.

Source: https://www.uua.org/action/statements/voting-rights-communities-color

Compiled by Robert Joe Lee, November 2018