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## Governor McAuliffe Restores Voting and Civil Rights to Over 200,000 Virginians

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**RICHMOND** – Governor Terry McAuliffe today restored the voting and civil rights of more than 200,000 Virginians who were convicted of felonies, served their time and completed any supervised release, parole or probation requirements. Each of those Virginians will immediately regain the right to register to vote, to run for office, to serve on a jury and to serve as a notary public.

“Throughout my administration my team and I have operated on a simple principle: Virginians who have served their time and reentered society should do so as full citizens of our Commonwealth and country,” **said Governor McAuliffe**. “Too often in both our distant and recent history, politicians have used their authority to restrict peoples’ ability to participate in our democracy. Today we are reversing that disturbing trend and restoring the rights of more than 200,000 of our fellow Virginians who work, raise families and pay taxes in every corner of our Commonwealth.”

The Governor implemented his action by signing an order restoring the rights of every Virginia felon who completed his or her sentence and all other requirements as of April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2016. The total number of Virginians impacted by the Governor’s order today is 206,000. He also instructed the Secretary of the Commonwealth to prepare a similar order monthly in order to restore the rights of individuals who complete their sentences in the future.

Article V, Section 12 of the Constitution of Virginia grants the Governor the authority to “remove political disabilities consequent upon conviction” of a felony.

Previous to today’s action, the McAuliffe Administration restored the rights of more than 18,000 Virginians, which is more than the past 7 governors combined over their full four-year terms.

The Governor also worked to reform the restoration process by reducing the waiting period for more serious offenders from five years to three, classifying all drug-related convictions as non-violent, shortening the application for more serious offenders from 13 pages to one page, removing a requirement that individuals pay their court costs before they can have their rights restored, and ensuring that a notation will be included in an individual’s criminal record designating that his or her rights have been restored.

**Governor McAuliffe added**, “If we are going to build a stronger and more equal Virginia, we must break down barriers to participation in civic life for people who return to society seeking a second chance. We must welcome them back and offer the opportunity to build a better life by taking an active role in our democracy. I believe it is time to cast off Virginia’s troubling history of injustice and embrace an honest, clean process for restoring the rights of these men and women.”

Joining Governor McAuliffe at today's announcement were Secretary of the Commonwealth Kelly Thomasson, former Secretary of the Commonwealth Levar Stoney, the Rev. Ben Campbell and Raja Johnson.

Dr. Campbell is the founder of Richmond Hill, an ecumenical Christian fellowship and residential community which actively seeks reconciliation in Richmond. He was named Richmond's "Peacemaker of the Year" in 2013 by the Richmond Peace Education Center. Ms. Johnson is a single mother and resident of Richmond, Governor McAuliffe restored her rights in 2014. Ms. Johnson has since gone on to obtain a Medical Associates Degree.

For more information about the Governor's order, frequently asked questions and the status of individual restoration of rights petitions, please visit: [www.Commonwealth.Virginia.gov/RoR](http://www.Commonwealth.Virginia.gov/RoR) (<http://www.Commonwealth.Virginia.gov/RoR>)

The full text of Governor McAuliffe's order restoring the rights of more than 200,000 Virginians is below:

## **Order for the Restoration of Rights**

### **TO ALL TO WHOM THESE PRESENTS SHALL COME – GREETINGS:**

**WHEREAS**, Article II, Section 1 of the Constitution of Virginia requires that all those convicted of a felony be deprived of their civil right to vote unless they have their civil rights restored by the Governor or other appropriate authority; and

**WHEREAS**, it is estimated that approximately 206,000 Virginians are permanently disenfranchised from participating in political life due to prior felony convictions even after completing their court-ordered sentences; and

**WHEREAS**, such disenfranchisement disproportionately affects racial minorities and economically disadvantaged Virginians; and

**WHEREAS**, Virginians have increasingly advanced the ideals of equality of all races and peoples, while rejecting the indefinite and unforgiving stigmatization of persons who have committed past criminal acts; and

**WHEREAS**, the Governor is empowered by Article V, Section 12 of the Constitution of Virginia "to remove political disabilities consequent upon conviction," thus to restore the political rights of any persons disqualified by Article II, Section 1; and

**WHEREAS**, the power granted to the Governor under Article V, Section 12 to remove political disabilities is absolute and without any limitation not expressly stated within the Constitution of Virginia; and

**WHEREAS**, all individuals who have served the terms of their incarceration and any periods of supervised release deserve to re-enter society on fair and just terms, including to participate in the political and economic advancement of Virginia; and

**WHEREAS**, the restoration of civil rights has been noted to achieve substantial benefits for those individuals who have felt long-exiled from mainstream life; and

**WHEREAS**, democracy is strengthened by having more citizens involved in the political process;

**NOW, THEREFORE**, I, Terence R. McAuliffe, Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia, by and through the authority vested in me under Article V, Section 12 of the Constitution of Virginia, do hereby order the removal of the political disabilities consequent upon conviction of a felony imposed by Article II, Section 1 of the Constitution of Virginia from all those individuals who have, as of this 22nd day of April 2016, (1) completed their sentences of incarceration for any and all felony convictions; and (2) completed their sentences of supervised release, including probation and parole, for any and all felony convictions. The civil rights restored by this Order are: (1) the right to vote; (2) the right to hold public office; (3) the right to serve on a jury; and (4) the right to act as a notary public. Nothing in this Order restores the right to ship, transport, possess, or receive firearms.

Given under my hand and under the Lesser Seal of the Commonwealth at Richmond, on April 22, 2016 in the 240th year of the Commonwealth.

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**Governor of Virginia**

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**Secretary of the Commonwealth**

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