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Governor McAuliffe Announces New Reforms to Restoration of Rights Process

~McAuliffe Administration Has Restored the Rights of More Virginians Than Any Previous Governor~

Governor McAuliffe announced today two changes to the restoration of rights process, representing the latest steps in pursuit of his priority to ensure all Virginians have the opportunity to exercise their voting and civil rights.

Under the new reform, outstanding court costs and fees will no longer prohibit an individual from having his or her rights restored.

“We have forced these men and women to battle a complicated and bewildering tangle of red tape to reach the voting booth, and too often we still turn them away,” **said Governor McAuliffe**. “These men and women will still be required to pay their costs and fees, but their court debts will no longer serve as a financial barrier to voting, just as poll taxes did for so many years in Virginia.”

Individuals who have their rights restored will now have the option to include a notation in their criminal record designating that their rights have been restored.

Today the Governor also announced that, as of June 23, 2015, Virginia has restored civil rights for more than 8,250 individuals. In 17 months, the McAuliffe administration has surpassed the number that any previous governor restored in his full four-year term.

“While Virginia has historically been resistant to voting laws that encourage participation, today’s announcement represents a new commitment to opening up the democratic process,” **said Secretary of the Commonwealth Levar Stoney**.

“African-American enfranchisement is a national challenge, and I am pleased that Governor McAuliffe is taking aggressive action to put Virginia at the forefront of this effort,” **said Senator Mamie Locke**. “These changes move the Commonwealth forward at a time when voter participation is particularly important to the future economic prosperity of our minority communities.

Governor McAuliffe made the announcement and presented Restoration of Rights grant orders to three individuals at Boaz and Ruth, a Richmond organization that works to rebuild lives and communities through collaborative partnerships.