Introduction:

People convicted of crimes are expected to become responsible citizens after being discharged from correctional supervision. However, many individuals are excluded from exercising their civic rights because they are banned from voting in many jurisdictions. The laws that prohibit offenders from voting, even after they have been discharged from correctional supervision, frustrate the offenders in their attempts to fully reenter society successfully, reduce the voting constituency, and disproportionately exclude a large number of people from participating fully in society.

Nearly all states place some form of restriction on felon voting rights. Some states have developed processes to restore voting rights, but many felons are unaware of them, do not present the proper documentation, or the processes are often cumbersome and discourage voting.

Policy Statement:

The American Correctional Association affirms that voting is a fundamental right in a democracy and it considers a ban on voting after a felon is discharged from correctional supervision to be contradictory to the goals of a democracy, the rehabilitation of felons, and their successful reentry to the community.

Therefore, ACA advocates:

A. Restoring voting rights for felony offenders upon the completion of their sentence;

B. Encouraging restoration of voting rights for those on community supervision;

C. Developing protocols for federal, state, and local correctional agencies that inform inmates near their release about the means by which their voting rights will be restored and provide
education and assistance to felony offenders in completing the restoration process to regain their civil rights; and

D. Developing state election agency procedures that permit eligible felony offenders to vote in elections after completing and filing all necessary paperwork.

This Public Correctional Policy was unanimously ratified by the American Correctional Association Delegate Assembly at the Winter Conference in Phoenix, AZ on January 12, 2005. It was last reviewed and reaffirmed at the 2020 Winter Conference in San Diego, CA on January 11, 2020.