

Despite the fact that this may seem like dire news, we must recognize that while all hard times are difficult, they are also opportunities to initiate positive change and a new perspective. Individually, we are all facing hurdles, as are our governments, and we must jump over them in a constructive fashion.

Even if you have a felony on your record like I do, you can demonstrate that you still have a lot to offer, and effect positive change in our government. The key is to prove that you have a firm grasp on the inner workings of politics and government, and can give your perspective on issues, candidates and office holders in a positive and constructive fashion.

Because of the vigorous campaign and hard work by the good folks at OpenDoors, the people of this state voted to allow those of us with felonies on their record the right to vote once released. Now, we have no excuses... we must get involved and we must make our voices heard.

The very first step is to learn about your government and politics. This class, which runs for two sessions (two hours per session) takes you through the basics of politics and government. You will get a practical perspective on how to participate in or run a grassroots campaign, and how to run for elected office. The class will also furnish you with a capsule summary of the inner workings of our local, state and national governments. In essence, you will learn how our government operates on a daily basis. This will give you the tools you need to work on issues that matter to you, whether they are local zoning codes in your city or town, state laws that need to be changed, or national issues of concern.

According to the PEW Charitable Trust's latest report on those incarcerated, 1 in 99.1 of Americans are incarcerated. Other studies have shown that 1 in 38 Americans are either incarcerated, on parole or on probation. Those are staggering numbers. If we participate in politics, and encourage our families to participate, we can make a positive difference in our communities.

Contact OpenDoors at 781-5808 ext. 100 to enroll or simply drop by the Resource Center.

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