

Submitter: Isabela Villarreal
On Behalf Of: Nickolas Vega
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure: Support SB 579, Guaranteeing the Right to Vote

To Next Up,

3-29-23

Firstly I'd like to say thank you for reaching out to me. I am always looking for new ways I can help people and this opportunity seems to have found me, so I will make the best of it and hopefully you can use my answers to your questions as part of a legislative session or some other equally beneficial means. I'll reply to the questions in the order they are presented.

1. Have you voted in the past? If not, what kept you from voting in past elections?

When I was free I never once voted. This is because I didn't know how, I didn't know where to find accurate information about any person running for any office, and I was never taught in school about how important and impactful my right to vote would be. It is only now that I have been stripped of said right that I realize how important it is.

2. Do you support this legislation?

I fully support this legislation as the right to vote is part of American freedom. It's what separates us from Monarchies, Communist parties, and all other forms of government found worldwide which seek to silence the common people of their nations. The right to vote can and should be extended to include every person regardless of station or situation.

3. What would it mean to you to be able to vote in prison?

Having the ability to vote restored would bring us as a state a step closer to humanizing citizens, but for me personally it would also bring about a newfound sense of purpose—a new, productive way to contribute to society in which I was ignorant to all my life before. It would prompt me to keep up with news and current events, and to seek out up-to-date information on all candidates I could vote for, and it would give me a voice from a place which has kept me silenced during my stay.

4. Why does voting matter to you?

Voting matters to me because it's something I've never participated in before. It's important because wins and losses can be (and have been) decided by one vote. To think that my vote could be the one to turn the tide is an empowering thought from a place where nearly all my power has been stripped from me. Voting matters because I am still an active part of society and just as any babysitter, student, lawyer or doctor, my voice deserves to be heard.

5. What would it mean to you to be able to vote right now?

To be able to vote right now would be a call to action. It would spur me to seek knowledge I might otherwise stay unaware of in a fugue of blissful (yet damnable) ignorance. It would give my existence a sense of purpose and give my life more meaning knowing that my personal opinion still matters to the community I am in or will go back to.

6. If you could tell the legislature something, what would you tell them?

I believe in the Declaration of Independence, our forefathers said something akin to "In order to create a more perfect union...we are endowed by our creator with certain unalienable rights." I strongly believe that the right to vote falls into this category, and with so much negativity floating throughout the world and in our own society right now, it's about time we start working toward that more perfect union.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to share my opinion.

Respectfully,

Nickolas Vega #18764976
2500 Westgate Avenue
Pendleton, OR 97801