



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on April 24, 2019

Sanders' Push for Imprisoned Felons to Vote Raises Questions About Government

During a Town Hall meeting in Manchester, New Hampshire, sponsored by CNN on Monday night, Senator Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), a leading candidate for the Democratic Party's 2020 presidential nomination, was asked about his extreme position of letting imprisoned convicts vote.

Democrats have been pushing for expanding the right to vote to illegal aliens, to 16- and 17-year-olds, and to convicted felons. Most states already allow convicted felons' right to vote to be restored once they have completed their sentences, but Sanders asserts that convicts should be able to vote even while they are behind bars.



A student drew out this radical position from Sanders by asking him if he believed the Boston Marathon bomber should be allowed to vote. Sanders said yes, answering, "I think the right to vote is inherent to our democracy. Yes, even for terrible people, because once you start chipping away and you say, Well, that guy committed a terrible crime." Not letting him vote, Sanders argued, is a "slippery slope." After all, if you don't let the Unabomber and Timothy McVeigh vote, then the next thing you know, a speeding ticket has cost you the right to vote, under this reasoning. Hey, with early voting, a person could cast a vote on death row, despite election day itself coming after the "voter" has been executed. It gives a whole new meaning to the term "absentee ballot."

Fellow candidate Senator Kamala Harris (D-Calif.) appeared to attempt to dodge the question, saying, "I think we should have that conversation," adding that the right to vote should not be "stripped needlessly."

Reactions to Sanders' position varied. Ronna McDaniel, who chairs the Republican National Committee, retorted, "If you had any doubt about how radical the Democrat Party has become, their 2020 frontrunner wants to let terrorists convicted of murdering American citizens vote from prison. It's beyond extreme."

Of course, what is considered "extreme" today may be considered "mainstream" within a few years, so the proposal of Sanders should be taken seriously. Some on the Left were quick to jump on board. The *Daily Beast* ran an article by George Mason criminology professor Andrew Novak, who lamented that taking the vote away from those in prison "dehumanizes" them. Instead, Novak argued that prisoners should be encouraged to "feel involved in the political process."

Not surprisingly, Novak pulled the "race card," writing, "Many prisoners are racial minorities." Not allowing the imprisoned to vote "causes Congress and state legislatures to be more conservative than the public at large."



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We should not be surprised that those on the Left look upon murderers, robbers, and rapists as just another potential voting bloc that they can count on to keep them in power, but *Reason* magazine, a libertarian publication that often runs some good investigative articles, also favors letting imprisoned convicts cast a ballot. The article asserts that there are “plenty of people who are in prison who deserve to be free. Don’t they deserve to have a voice in American democracy as well?”

Sadly, *Reason* misses the point just as much as the left-wing *Daily Beast*. The purpose of government is not to ensure that the will of the majority prevails, but instead is to ensure that our rights to life, liberty, and property are protected — and many of those inside prison walls are who we need to be protected from. Both publications use the word “democracy” to describe our system of government.

Democracy simply means that the people rule. But as noted by Alexis de Tocqueville, we can suffer under the “tyranny of the majority” just as much as from an oligarchy or a monarchy. Just because the majority votes to take our property — simply because they want it, we have it, and they do not — does not make it morally correct.

Our Constitution created a *republic*, not a democracy. A democracy, as it has been bluntly put, is like two wolves and one sheep deciding what’s for dinner. If we were a democracy, then the Bill of Rights would be redundant — indeed the entire Constitution would be redundant.

John Locke argued that criminals broke an implicit social contract. Such a rule-breakers should lose their right to participate in the making of the rules, because, after all, rule-breakers are the reason we even have government to protect our God-given rights. Locke’s social contract theory was the foundation for the Declaration of Independence, which declares, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by the Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.”

Note that the Declaration clearly states the purpose of government: to secure our rights. Government’s “just” powers are derived from the consent of the governed. In other words, the “just” powers of the government are those that carry out the purpose of government, i.e., to secure our basic rights. Even the majority must exercise only those powers of government that are just.

We do not create government so the majority can take our property via a vote. If one person wants to practice a religion, that person should be allowed to freely practice that religion, regardless what the majority think, unless the religion infringes on another person’s rights. Yet, under “democracy,” the majority can dictate the religious practices of the minority.

Interestingly, most of those who support voting rights for imprisoned murderers, robbers, and rapists so as to pad the voting rolls with those who can be expected to vote for left-leaning candidates, do not favor allowing imprisoned convicts to exercise the right to keep and bear arms inside prison walls. But, the Second Amendment specifically protects the right to keep and bear arms. They would take that right away, not just from imprisoned convicts who may have used a firearm to murder someone, but from you, a law-abiding citizen who may very well need a gun to protect yourself from the latest favored group — imprisoned murderers, robbers, and rapists — of the radical Left.

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