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**CHIEF OF STAFF TO THE PRESIDENT
THE WHITE HOUSE**

02 MAY 14 2002

**Andrew H. Card, Jr.
Phone: (202) 456-6798
Fax: (202) 456-1907**

DATE: Saturday, May 11, 2002

TO	ACTION REQUESTED
✓ Nick Calio (LEG AFFAIRS) WW	For Your Information
Harriet Miers (STAFF SEC) WW	For Your Information

NOTES:

This may be duplicative but just in case you didn't get a copy when the letter was sent in late March 2002

PREPARED BY:

Melissa Bennett ... (202) 456-7256

**Rep. Juanita
Millender-McDonald**

Fax

To: Mr. Andrew Card, Chief of Staff, The White House
From: Shirley Cooks, Chief of Staff, Office of Rep. Juanita Millender-McDonald

Fax: 202/456-1907
Date: May 10, 2002

Phone: 202/456-6798
Pages: 3

Re: The attached
CC:

Urgent **For Review** **Please Comment**

•Comments:

Congresswoman Millender-McDonald would like Mr. Card to be aware of the attached letter to President Bush from Presidents Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford, Mr. Jack Kemp and herself.

JUANITA MILLENDER-McDONALD
37TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

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E-MAIL: Millender.McDonald@mail.house.gov
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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0537

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COMMITTEE ON
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WATER RESOURCES AND
ENVIRONMENT
COMMITTEE ON
SMALL BUSINESS
RANKING MEMBER
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
WORKFORCE, EMPOWERMENT
AND GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS
CO-CHAIR
CONGRESSIONAL WOMEN'S
CAUCUS

March 26, 2002

George W. Bush
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. President:

We commend you for the leadership that you are demonstrating during these challenging times for the country and applaud your vigilance in your efforts to eradicate terrorism throughout the world. May God continue to give you wisdom on your journey for peace.

We appreciate your taking a leadership role in Election Reform by supporting the National Commission's recommendations. The nation must rid itself of the tragic events of the last presidential election and ensure the American people that each vote does count. Thus the reason for our letter. A part of the report submitted to you by those who served on the election reform commission recommended that every American who commits a crime and pays his or her debt to society should have their right to vote restored. We perceive this right as the most fundamental act performed by citizens in our great representative democracy.

America's penal system is built on the premise that offenders can repay their debt to society and return as fully rehabilitated individuals. But an estimated 3.9 million Americans, or one in 50 adults, have permanently or currently lost the ability to vote because of a felony conviction. Permanent disenfranchisement fundamentally negates the principle of rehabilitation. Rehabilitated individuals enjoy the restoration of every right - except voting. Because voting is integral to being a productive member of society, America should be encouraging rehabilitated felons to vote, not prohibiting them.

States have the exclusive power to restore voting rights to ex-offenders under the Constitution, but not all states make this automatic. Some state laws vary on when a person convicted of a felony may regain his or her right to vote. These disparities cause confusion that can disenfranchise eligible voters. Seventeen states require specific gubernatorial action to regain voting

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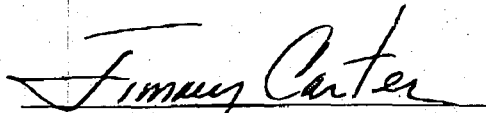
rights and twenty-one states can automatically restore voting rights.
Sixteen states require rehabilitated felons to receive a presidential pardon.

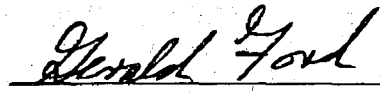
The National Commission on Federal Election Reform, on which two of us served, recommended that each state allow for restoration of voting rights to otherwise eligible citizens who have been convicted of a felony once they have fully served their sentence, including any term of probation or parole. Congresswoman Millender-McDonald has worked tirelessly during her tenure in Congress on this issue by introducing HR 5158 and pressing for its passage. She joins this letter as a concerned and committed stakeholder. Former Secretary Jack Kemp – with his Empower America – has been a proponent of this restoration of voting rights issue for years.

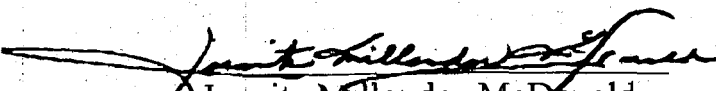
Mr. President, we respectfully request that you consider issuing a presidential proclamation to encourage states to change their existing laws on ex-felons voting rights. The proclamation would assist those states where ex-felons' voting rights are automatically restored upon clearance of their probation obligations. And it would prompt those states where disparities in restoration of voting rights exist to give meaningful consideration to this important matter.

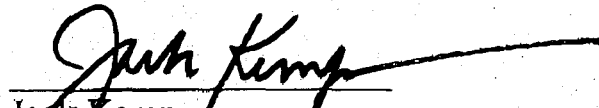
We thank you for your time and await your favorable response.

Sincerely,


Jimmy Carter
Former President


Gerald Ford
Former President


Juanita Millender-McDonald
Member of Congress


Jack Kemp
Empower America



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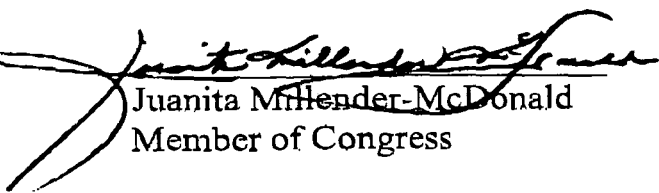
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