

The Second Chances Commitment

A simple commitment: When someone has paid their debt to society, their future should not be chained to their past. America must offer real pathways back into community — with the right to vote, the chance to work, and the dignity of a place to live.

Why It Matters

- Nearly **600,000 people** return from prison each year, many with no housing, no job, and no voice in democracy.
- Collateral consequences — over **40,000 legal restrictions** nationwide — keep returning citizens from rebuilding their lives.
- Denial of opportunity fuels cycles of poverty, family instability, and recidivism.

Our belief: Second chances are not optional charity. They are the test of a just republic.

What We're Saying

This is a commitment to replace permanent punishment with permanent possibility. People who return from incarceration should have the tools, rights, and opportunities to succeed and to give back.

What It Guarantees

- **Voting Rights Restoration:** Every citizen regains their voice in democracy once they return to their community.
- **Job Pipelines:** Training, apprenticeships, and employer incentives for hiring returning citizens.
- **Housing First:** Access to stable, affordable housing free from blanket discrimination.
- **Community Investment:** Funding for neighborhoods most impacted by mass incarceration.
- **Family Reconnection:** Support for parents and children to rebuild relationships after incarceration.

Programs You'll See

1. **Clean Slate Law:** Automatic expungement of nonviolent records after time served and restitution completed.
2. **Reentry Job Corps:** Federally funded training programs tied to real job placements in trades, tech, and service sectors.
3. **Ban the Box Nationwide:** End blanket employment discrimination based on prior convictions.
4. **Reentry Housing Vouchers:** Dedicated vouchers for returning citizens and transitional housing centers.
5. **Community Repair Fund:** Direct reinvestment in schools, clinics, and local businesses in high-incarceration zip codes.

How We'll Make It Real

0–100 Days

- Pass executive guidance to restore federal voting rights.
- Expand federal reentry grants to high-need counties.

Year 1

- Launch Reentry Job Corps in 100 communities.
- Provide first wave of reentry housing vouchers.

Years 2–3

- Implement Clean Slate expungement in all 50 states.
- Expand Ban the Box protections nationwide.

Years 4–5

- Establish Community Repair Funds in 500 neighborhoods.
- Guarantee access to housing, jobs, and voting rights across the nation.

Accountability & Measures

- **Voting:** % of returning citizens with restored voting rights.
- **Employment:** Job placement and retention rates of Reentry Job Corps participants.
- **Housing:** Number of returning citizens with stable housing within 12 months.
- **Recidivism:** Reduction in re-incarceration rates among program participants.
- **Community Impact:** Investments delivered to high-incarceration communities.

Guardrails & Values

- **Public Safety + Opportunity:** Balanced by focusing on nonviolent and low-level offenses first.
- **Equity First:** Focus on communities disproportionately impacted by mass incarceration.
- **Family Healing:** Programs centered on children of incarcerated parents.
- **Transparency:** Annual reentry scorecards published by state and federal agencies.

Who This Helps (Snapshots)

- **Tasha (26):** Released after three years, enters Reentry Job Corps, becomes a certified electrician.
- **Andre (41):** Automatically regains voting rights and casts his first ballot in 20 years.
- **Maria (12):** Reunited with her mother through family counseling and housing support.
- **Marcus (34):** Secures reentry housing voucher, transitions to stable employment in logistics.

What Success Looks Like

In 24 Months

- Reentry Job Corps active in 100 cities; first 50,000 records cleared under Clean Slate.

In 5 Years

- Recidivism rates cut in half among participants.
- Community Repair Funds revitalizing 500 neighborhoods.

In 10 Years

- Second chances are the American norm. Every returning citizen has the right to vote, a chance to work, and a safe place to live.

The Commitment

The Second Chances Commitment is a national pledge: that punishment will not define a lifetime. America will judge its justice not by how harshly it excludes, but by how fully it restores.

Historical Reference & Value

American history shows that second chances have often been withheld rather than guaranteed. After the Civil War, “Black Codes” and felony disenfranchisement stripped freedom from newly emancipated people. The War on Drugs era of the 1980s and 1990s created mandatory minimums and collateral consequences that devastated families and communities, particularly communities of color. Yet there have also been signs of reform: the Second Chance Act of 2008 expanded reentry programs, while state-level “Ban the Box” initiatives have helped reduce employment discrimination. Still, these efforts remain piecemeal. The Second Chances Commitment elevates restoration from scattered programs to a national guarantee — making reentry not a privilege, but a civic right, embedded in the fabric of justice.

Referenced Acts & Initiatives (Guiding Frameworks)

- **Clean Slate Law:** Provides automatic expungement of nonviolent criminal records once time served and restitution are complete.

- **Reentry Job Corps Act:** Establishes federally funded job training and placement programs in trades, technology, and service industries.
- **Ban the Box Nationwide Act:** Prohibits blanket employment discrimination against returning citizens, ensuring fair consideration.
- **Reentry Housing Voucher Act:** Expands access to housing vouchers and transitional housing for those leaving incarceration.
- **Community Repair Fund Act:** Directs federal reinvestment into schools, clinics, and businesses in neighborhoods most harmed by mass incarceration.
- **Voting Restoration Act:** Guarantees the immediate restoration of voting rights for citizens reentering their communities.

Sealing Line

So it is pledged: that America will no longer chain people to their past — second chances shall be the standard of justice, not the exception.