NAACP
Iowa-Nebraska State Area Conference of Branches

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MOVING POWERFULLY FORWARD! ---

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NAACP URGES IOWA'S NEXT GOVERNOR TO PROTECT EXECUTIVE ORDER 7 AND ENSURE PEOPLE WITH FELONY BACKGROUNDS WHO HAVE COMPLETED THEIR SENTENCES CAN EXERCISE THEIR RIGHT TO VOTE

CANDIDATE SAND AFFIRMS SUPPORT FOR PROTECTING VOTING-RIGHTS RESTORATION; CANDIDATE LAHN DID NOT RESPOND TO NAACP INQUIRY

DES MOINES, IOWA…With Election Day approaching on November 3, the NAACP Iowa-Nebraska State Area Conference of Branches urges Iowans to consider the future of Executive Order 7 (EO7) and to help ensure that people with felony backgrounds who who have completed their sentences are eligible to vote know their rights and participate in our democracy.

For years, the NAACP Iowa-Nebraska has provided leadership in the fight to expand voting rights for Iowans with felony convictions. Through sustained advocacy, public education, legislative engagement, coalition building, testimony, and direct discussions with state leaders, the NAACP helped advance a cause central to our democracy: ensuring that eligible citizens can participate in the political process.

Signed by Governor Kim Reynolds on August 5, 2020, Executive Order 7 (EO7) restored voting rights to tens of thousands of Iowans with felony convictions and continues to automatically restore those rights each day as individuals complete their sentences, subject to the order's requirements and exceptions. It was a significant achievement in a longstanding effort led by the NAACP and other advocates.

But this victory is not permanently secured. Without the Governor's Executive Order 7, Iowa's Constitution would continue to permit felony disenfranchisement, leaving Iowans with felony convictions who have completed their sentences barred from voting unless their rights were otherwise restored. EO7 is an executive action, not a permanent constitutional guarantee, and a future governor could change or rescind it. The right to vote should not depend on an executive order that can be changed by whoever occupies the Governor's office. It should be permanently protected in Iowa's Constitution.

NAACP Asked Candidates to State Their Positions
To inform Iowa voters, the NAACP Iowa-Nebraska sent both major-party gubernatorial campaigns the same questions about protecting EO7, making voting-rights restoration permanent, and ensuring that eligible Iowans know their rights and can confidently exercise them.

Rob Sand's campaign provided written answers affirming support for maintaining EO7, opposing efforts to rescind or undermine it, pursuing permanent protection, and implementing statewide nonpartisan voter education. The campaign also expressed support for working with the NAACP and affected communities and establishing measurable goals to increase registration and participation. The NAACP appreciates the campaign's response and its stated commitments on these important issues. We encourage voters to review the response and consider the positions expressed.

As of October 27, the Zach Lahn campaign had not responded to the NAACP's letter. The NAACP sent the inquiry through the U.S. Postal Service mail and four campaign email addresses, called the phone number listed in the campaign's official filing information and left a voicemail, and sent a text message allowing additional time for a response. No response had been received by the time of this release.

Read the Correspondence:
Letter sent to Rob Sand
Letter sent to Zach Lahn
Rob Sand campaign's written response

The NAACP believes voters deserve clear answers from both candidates about the future of voting rights in Iowa.

Protect Voting Right and Make Sure Eligible Iowans Vote
The NAACP's concern extends beyond whether EO7 remains in place. Restoring voting rights is essential, but restoration alone does not guarantee that people know their rights have been restored, register to vote, or feel comfortable participating in elections.

The Governor's office has an important role in ensuring that eligible Iowans receive clear, accurate, and accessible information. The NAACP calls on Iowa's next governor to protect EO7, pursue a permanent solution, and work with the NAACP, people directly affected, election officials, and community organizations to remove barriers to participation.

Executive Order 7: Complete Your Sentence, Register and Vote

Iowans with felony backgrounds should not assume they have lost their right to vote. Most Iowans with felony convictions can vote under Executive Order 7 once they have completed their sentences, including probation, parole, and other applicable supervision. The exception is convictions under Iowa Code Chapter 707, for which individuals may apply separately for restoration.

No additional restoration paperwork or disclosure of a felony record at the polls is required under EO7. Eligible Iowans should register and vote. Unpaid fines, fees, or restitution do not prevent them from voting.

The NAACP Iowa-Nebraska urges the next Governor to use the office's public platform to make this message clear, so eligible Iowans can exercise their voting rights without fear, confusion, or misinformation.

Election Day registration is also available to eligible voters who meet the required documentation and registration rules.

Do You Have Questions About Voting with a Felony Record:
Iowans who are uncertain about their eligibility should seek clarification before assuming they cannot vote.

- See the NAACP Iowa-Nebraska flyer: Voting with a Felony Record.
- Check eligibility and learn how to register: RestoreYourVote.Iowa.gov
- Call: Iowa Governor's Office: 515-281-5211
- Call: Iowa Secretary of State: 515-281-0145 or 1-888-767-8683

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Continuing to Protect the Democracy

"The NAACP has invested decades of work in advancing voting rights nationally and locally because participation in our democracy is fundamental," said Betty Andrews, President of the NAACP Iowa-Nebraska State Area Conference of Branches and a member of the National NAACP Board of Directors. "Executive Order 7 was an important victory here in Iowa, but we must protect that progress, work toward a permanent guarantee, and ensure that every eligible Iowan knows they have the right to vote and feels empowered to exercise it."

As Iowans prepare to choose their next governor, the NAACP urges voters to consider each candidate's position on Executive Order 7, the future of voting-rights restoration, and the responsibility to ensure that eligible citizens can meaningfully participate in our democracy.

The NAACP Iowa-Nebraska State Area Conference of Branches remains committed to protecting voting rights and advancing full and equal participation in our democracy.

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