

#EndTheException

A CAMPAIGN TO ABOLISH SLAVERY FOR ALL

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM

Slavery is an evil that has loomed over our nation since its founding. Its racist legacy — carried through convict leasing, Jim Crow laws, and mass incarceration — continues to threaten the lives today.

Passed in 1865, the Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution is celebrated for abolishing slavery and involuntary servitude. However, to the surprise of many, the Thirteenth Amendment includes an exception that allows slavery and involuntary servitude to be used as punishment for crime. During Reconstruction, this exception allowed states to pass Black Codes that allowed for the criminalization, incarceration, and re-enslavement Black people.

Still today, more than 150 years later, people who are incarcerated and labor under this exception across our country are still disproportionately Black and brown. They are forced to work for little to no pay under the threat of further punishment, such as loss of family visits, solitary confinement, and denial of parole.

WHAT'S THE SOLUTION

We know that slavery is wrong, and our Constitution should reflect our values. S.J.R. 21 and H.J.R. 53, introduced by Sen. Jeff Merkley and Rep. Nikema Williams, comprise a bipartisan joint resolution to amend the U.S. Constitution to prohibit the use of slavery and involuntary servitude as a punishment for crime.

ABOLITION AMENDMENT

“Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude may be imposed as a punishment for a crime.”

WHY NOW

The movement to #EndTheException has broad bipartisan support across the country.

In 2018, Colorado became the first state since Rhode Island — the only state to have fully abolished slavery prior to the Thirteenth Amendment — to end the exception. Utah and Nebraska followed in 2020. In all three states, the successful ballot initiatives came after unanimous, bipartisan legislative votes. In 2022, Alabama, Louisiana, Oregon, Tennessee, Vermont, will have similar initiatives on their ballots. And many more states are organizing.

It's time for Congress to act! The Abolition Amendment is supported by more than 80 national organizations. A full list of endorsers can be found at endtheexception.com.

No Slavery. No Exceptions.

SUPPORT S.J. RES 21 & H.J. RES 53